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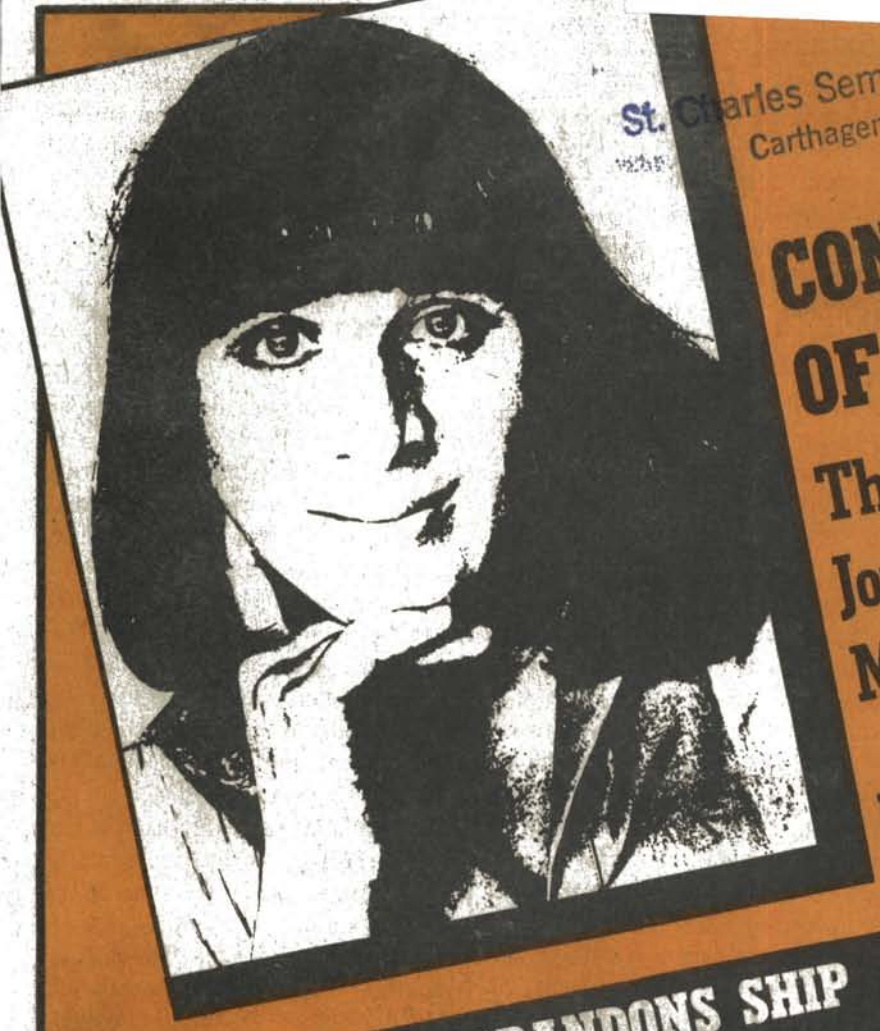

CONCENTRATION OF PURPOSE
The Artistic Journey of Mary Gordon
ROSEMARY BOOTH

LEFEBVRE ABANDONS SHIP
William D. Dinges

THE POPE IN AUSTRIA
Gordon C. Zahn

The Teaching of Jacob Neusner: JOHN T. PAWLIKOWSKI

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CORRESPONDENCE

Women only?

Chicago, Ill.

To the Editors: A certain disquiet hovered over my reading of your six "responses to the pastoral on women" ["Sexism, Sin, & Grace, June 17]. Their discussion was spirited, helpful, and to the point. But why women only? Sexism and feminism, in their own way, are issues which command a response from men. Women and men have to dialogue, unless the pastoral is to be viewed only as a letter of the bishops to women alone.

ED MARCINIAK

Correcting the record

Jersey City, N.J.

To the Editors: Dennis M. Doyle stated the following in "The Meaning of AIDS" [June 3]: "[Dr. Eileen P.] Flynn is critical of official Catholic teaching about homosexual activity, and suggests that monogamous relationships be encouraged."

Dr. Doyle's reading of Chapter Four of my book *AIDS: A Catholic Call for Compassion* (Sheed & Ward, 1985) is incorrect. In my chapter "Catholic Moral Teaching, Homosexuality, and AIDS," I pointed out the urgent need for a thorough reexamination of the revisionist critique of official teaching in light of the threat HIV poses to homosexual males. I spoke about a predicament in which homosexual men may find themselves, as follows:

> A homosexual person who resolves to be celibate but fails is likely to engage in sexual acts as the result of impulse or compulsion. Succumbing to temptation usually entails anonymous, promiscuous sex. From a moral point of view such sex would not be grievously sinful because passion lessens a person's culpability. However, in psychological terms, this kind of sex is impersonal and demeaning, and it undermines a person's sense of self-esteem. And, from the standpoint of medical science, in the 1980s, the decade of AIDS, anonymous, promiscuous sex is the most dangerous kind.

I also advocate "establishing a forum in which there could be open debate and discussion on the pros and cons of monogamous homosexual unions" because "a church committed to justice, sensitive to human needs, and aware of the requirement all persons have for sound guidance, should be willing to invest the effort to examine the issues."

The church is frequently required to face head-on the moral, catechetical, and pastoral dimensions of its teachings. Difficult questions are best addressed by calling forth the expertise of social scientists, by listening to the real life experience of people who are directly involved, and by being faithful to both the tradition of the church and the ongoing guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Monsignor Charles Dollen, who reviewed my book in the May, 1986 edition of *The Priest*, was on target in his perception of my intentions:

> After going through this profoundly moving book, I was left with the impression that our Catholic theologians need to reexamine the whole notion of human sexuality, taking into account the new facts which the modern sciences, such as psychology and psychiatry, have uncovered. Sex as a biological fact of life for procreation is that starting point, but human sexuality goes far beyond sex.

The spirit of this letter, like the spirit of my book, is to encourage further discussion of the point at issue.

EILEEN P. FLYNN
Saint Peter's College

The author replies:

Flynn makes a subtle distinction. On the one hand, there is being "critical of official Catholic teaching." On the other hand, there is her own approach of persuasively presenting challenging material with the intention of getting bishops to reconsider their position, but without formally committing herself to the position she persuasively presents. I accept her nuance, and am happy that she has taken this occasion to clarify her valuable approach to such a crucial and sensitive topic.

DENNIS M. DOYLE

Knowing when to stop

Summit, N.J.

To the Editors: It was recently my good fortune to read "Knowing When to Stop" by John J. Mitchell, Jr. [May 6]. I work as a social worker in a Christian nursing home and have seen many elderly, facing the end of life, lose their desire for food and water. It has always been the natural instinct of our nurses, doctors, other staff, and the home's medical ethics committee to respect the privacy of the patient and his/her family to decide if artificial feeding or hydration should be provided.

As a Catholic, I was baffled and disturbed to see inserts in my church bulletin declaring such a policy of acceptance and respect "sinful" and "murderous." These documents proclaim that in all instances in which patients required artifi-

(Continued on page 443)

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, Ohio 44691. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Copyright © 1988 Commonweal Foundation.

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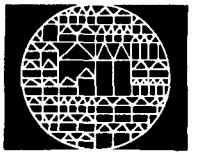

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Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly, except monthly Christmas-New Year's and July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Single copy, $1.50. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $32; Canada, $34; foreign, $37. Special two-year rate: U.S., $57; Canada, $61; foreign, $67. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St. New York, N.Y. 10038.

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome but cannot be considered or returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Higher ground

Seldom in politics does a single moment serve to mark historic change. One such moment occurred during the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta. All Americans, however intense or tepid their interest in party politics, would do well to ponder that moment.

When duly elected black delegates were denied entrance to the Democrats' convention hall in 1964, Jesse Jackson was only twenty-two years old. This summer, only two-and-a-half decades later, Jackson himself was a pivotal figure for the Democrats, acclaimed, feared, wooed; not merely a delegate but a credible national candidate. Social change rarely moves at such a pace.

Jackson understood, and said, that his achievement was not his alone; he "stood on others' shoulders." But he also stood on his own two feet and spoke with his own voice. True to Southern custom, he began with a prayer of thanks for being "in this place at this time." He spoke of God and Jesus, referred to biblical stories and images, the lion and the lamb. In ringing rhythms he recalled themes beloved by Baptists, "Higher Ground" and "Jesus Loves the Little Children." Bringing Rosa Parks on stage, evoking the memory of Martin Luther King, Jackson ennobled Americans, telling us the stories of our saints and martyrs. "Their prayers are being answered," Jackson said, "...hope is eternal."

Before he spoke, everyone knew Jackson's power to evoke a response. He used his power to become not only the most potent symbol but the most eloquent apostle of "the politics of inclusion." Using symbols as homespun as a patchwork quilt, the man who has never held elective office taught lessons in party politics—fight for your own cause, press your own ideas, and when the ballots are counted, support the winner.

More impressively, Jackson appealed to what is best in Americans: common sense and common ground, interdependence, compassion for the poor and weak, religious faith and hope, belief in hard work and opportunity for all. He spoke of drugs as self-destructive, of cynicism, fear, and violence as beneath our dignity: "We can do better than that." His refrain to the downtrodden—"I understand"—carried a credibility that few public figures can match. Knowing the delegate count, he was free to mention marginalized groups like gays and lesbians and to speak the needs of ignored minorities like the handicapped and the uninsured. He told the simple truths that have made him a voice of conscience for the party—that nuclear "first use" can beget "first retaliation": that most poor people work hard every day, and still can't make it; that the rich who "had the party" during the Reagan years must now pay for the party; that "you can't fight a war on drugs until you're going to challenge the bankers and the gun sellers"—the launderers of dirty money, the merchants of violence.

It was a moment to be celebrated, remembered, enlarged.

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THE ECONE AFFAIR

LEFEBVRE ABANDONS SHIP
PETER FINALLY BARKS

The "Econe affair," the fourteen-year conflict between the Vatican and rebel Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, has turned a new chapter. On June 30, defiant, self-assured, and pontificating against the influence of "modernism, socialism, and Zionism" in the church, Lefebvre consecrated four of his own priests under a tent-church constructed in the shadow of his flagship seminary at Econe, Switzerland. In so doing, the French archbishop and his prelates incurred automatic excommunication, thereby creating the first official schism in the church since the separation of the Polish National Catholic Church of America at the turn of the century.

In taking the scalpel to himself and his supporters, Lefebvre's motives were both grandiose—he alone, through the instrumentality of his priestly fraternity, had acted to save the "true church" from apostasy; and pragmatic—he would not wish to leave his 300 plus seminarians "orphans," nor would the other organizational initiatives of his *petite eglise* be brought to an end with the demise of the last Society of St. Pius X priest.

In a letter written ten months before the consecrations, Lefebvre had assured his four bishops-to-be that "Divine Providence" had mandated that he act to ensure successors—in light of the church's current bout of "universal decadence," the See of Peter and the posts of authority in Rome now being "occupied by anti-Christs." In a head-scratching twist of logic, Lefebvre ended his letter by admonishing his future bishops to "remain attached to the See of Peter...."

In fact, Lefebvre had made public his plan to consecrate successors as early as June 1987. (He had privately broached the subject with Cardinal Ratzinger several years earlier.) In light of the archbishop's age, eighty-two, and declining health, the Vatican clearly viewed the 1987 warning with alarm. Another flurry of shuttle diplomacy commenced, including Cardinal Gagnon's four-week "visitation" (thirteen years after the Vatican's initial investigation) to Econe and, according to reports, the submission directly to the pope of a "favorable" assessment of the Society's work.

The two noteworthy aspects of the negotiations between Lefebvre and the Vatican this past year were the extraordinary lengths to which the Vatican went to accommodate a prelate who had threaded his dissent with "anti-Christ" rhetoric, and the archbishop's own brand of sectarian intransigence—highlighted by his repeated assertion that, regardless of what the Vatican did, his consecration of traditionalist prelates was "imminent."

Lefebvre's last round of Vatican arm-twisting led to the signing of a protocol on May 5 granting official recognition to the society, semi-independence from diocesan bishops, and permission to continue use of the Tridentine liturgy. Differences over Vatican II-related documents were to be thrashed out by a panel of two Lefebvre followers and seven Vatican delegates. On the critical issue of a successor, Lefebvre was given permission to consecrate one traditionalist prelate. The archbishop, for his part, would recognize the legitimacy of the council and the authority of the pope—both of which he had spent nearly two decades publicly repudiating.

According to media reports, Lefebvre's subsequent withdrawal from the May 5 agreement rose out of his suspicion that the Vatican was stalling (no date had been set for consecration). Claiming that he sensed that his own "end was near," Lefebvre insisted on the June 30 date. He remained unyielding in his insistence on more than one episcopal successor, lest the society find itself vulnerable again with only a single bishop to insure its perpetuation. He also objected to the head count on the panel. From remarks included in his June 30 consecration sermon, it can also be inferred that his French pride did not take kindly to Cardinal Ratzinger's purported demand that he repent "for his errors" before the ink had dried on the compromise. A last minute appeal by Pope John Paul II "to renounce" his project, and a consecration-eve demand (comically derided by Lefebvre) that he "drive to Rome immediately" proved futile—like all previous attempts to placate Lefebvre. The die had been cast.

Ultimately the collapse of the May negotiation revolved around the issues of power and authority, symbolized in Lefebvre's absolute unwillingness to relinquish control over his priestly fraternity to "modernist Rome."

Sect and/or cult-like religious movements are never as interesting in themselves as they are for the light they shed on the complex dialectics of religion, culture, and social change. Archbishop Lefebvre's brand of integralist traditionalism—Catholicism's contemporary analogue to Protestant fundamentalism—provides yet another moment for reflection on the state of the church in the wake of a tumultuous quarter century of *aggiornamento*.

The more immediate issues raised by Lefebvre's schism are now somewhat prosaic: the enduring problems of unity and diversity, of doctrine and discipline, of Catholic identity, and the continuing crisis of authority in the church. On this latter point, the Econe affair illustrates that serious conflict among Catholics is not confined to the rank and file or to "dissenting" theologians, but exists also among those who are in positions to lead and define the role of the church. Lefebvre's movement, as well as the Vatican's willingness to reach rapprochement with it, also points to the staying power of clericalism,

In keeping with *Commonweal*'s usual summer schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue published will be dated September 9, after which biweekly publication will be resumed.

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triumphalism, and other ecclesial and world-view orientations that long made Catholics aliens in the modern world. There is, after all, more than a modicum of truth to Lefebvre's assertion that he is different because he remained the same.

Comparisons will no doubt be made between the Vatican's extraordinary efforts to reach rapprochement with Lefebvre and his supporters, and its shorter-fused, punitive response to the Catholic left. (Caution should be exercised here in distinguishing between individual dissent and that expressed in an organized juridical manner.)

Speculation will also focus on whether Lefebvre's schismatic initiatives would have matured as they did had the response to the archbishop and his priestly fraternity been either more severe, or more lenient, from the beginning—depending on one's view of the matter. The effect of the off- again/on-again policy regarding the Tridentine liturgy in encouraging traditionalist recalcitrance will also be discussed. In both respects, there is ample professional literature intimating how the exercise of authority facilitates secession, especially when authorities fail to exercise their power with conviction and consistency.

The Vatican position vis-à-vis Lefebvre and his traditionalist crusade has not been an enviable one. In the context of a new ecumenical atmosphere in the church, Rome has had to disown one of its own—and one who, on many points of ecclesiology, liturgy, and in his analysis of the malaise in the church and contemporary culture, shares views compatible with some Vatican thinking. On the other hand, as I have suggested elsewhere (*America*, June 18, 1988) rapprochement with Lefebvre would have implicitly legitimated repudiation of Vatican II, rewarded the rejection of *aggiornamento*, and discredited the church's own discipline and law by tolerating within it one who had flagrantly violated them.

The traditionalist movement is unlikely to grow dramatically. Sectarian movements of this nature have a well-established track record for further division and organizational dissipation. Furthermore, a movement claiming legitimacy as the Roman Catholic church based on the perception that the See of Peter is occupied by the "anti-Christ" is inherently self-limited. Nor is the trauma of change that initially galvanized the traditionalist movement as acute now as it was in the first decade following the council.

Vatican efforts to accommodate traditionalist Catholics by relaxing the rules regarding use of the Tridentine Mass are obviously too late to dissuade Lefebvre and his hard-core constituents. This initiative should be viewed, instead, as an olive branch geared to keeping Catholics out of the movement by accommodating disaffected conservatives who in the past have made up much of Lefebvre's rank and file.

In his book, *American Catholicism: And Now Where?* (Plenum, 1987), John Deedy observed that in the Catholic experience, the word "traditional" was nearly synonymous with "conservative." The events of the past month have helped to differentiate decisively these two terms. WILLIAM D. DINGES

William D. Dinges teaches in the religious education department at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

WAS THIS TRIP NECESSARY?

THE POPE IN AUSTRIA

TWO SWINGS, TWO MISSES

Pope John Paul II is to be forgiven if, like some of his ever-carping critics, he decides it would be well to cut back on foreign travel and spend more time at the Vatican. The results of his most recent visit to Austria are a case in point.

Following international criticism for having received President Kurt Waldheim at the Vatican in 1987, it was predictable that the pope's meeting and appearances with him in Austria—however much they were required by diplomatic protocol—would stir a new round of recriminations. John Paul's visit to Mauthausen, Austria's notorious concentration camp, might have tempered the criticism to some extent were it not for the fact that his failure to give specific mention to the large number of Jewish victims who perished there provided additional reason for his critics to take offense. Then, as if to cap it all, he or his advisers were caught up, one assumes innocently, in an egregious affront to the memory of an authentic Austrian martyr of the Nazi period.

As papal visits become more promotional in nature, whatever spiritual purposes they are intended to serve are in danger of being diminished or even negated by concern—or, as in this case, perhaps, lack of adequate concern—for their public relations impact. The jubilant throngs at the cathedrals of Vienna, Salzburg, and Innsbruck, a rousing success by any measure, must be judged in the context of charges of insensitivity to the darker aspects of Austria's National Socialist history.

The issue is too easily personified as "the Waldheim problem." I do not agree with those who condemn the formal diplomatic meetings, whether as host or as guest, with the president of what is perhaps the "most Catholic" of European states. As long as the Vatican preserves the fiction of temporal sovereignty, this must be expected. On grounds of moral sensitivity one might be more critical of meetings the pope has had with others (some of them American, some Israeli) who have shared more direct responsibility for the destruction of innocent human lives than this validly elected public official who has been accused (but not convicted) of peripheral and indirect involvement in war crimes.

The Mauthausen stop, if intended, even in part, to neutralize the objections of meeting with Waldheim, actually aggravated an already difficult situation. As one who has visited the camp and is still shaken by the memory of its infamous "stairway to death" and the garden of impressive memorials almost completely dominated by a great, black, twisted menorah, I find the failure to mention the Jewish victims almost incomprehensible. One may argue against the tendency of some to grant

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Desmond O'Grady writes from Rome:

"*Commonweal*'s former Rome correspondent, Henry Ten Kortenaar, was knocked down by a car and died without regaining consciousness on June 14 while crossing a street in Rome. He leaves his wife, Angela, and two teen-aged daughters, Cristina and Sylvie. At his death, he was correspondent for Dutch and Belgian Radio."

Mr. Ten Kortenaar was *Commonweal*'s correspondent from 1971 to 1978.

May he rest in peace.

the international Jewish community something approaching "monopoly rights" to the Holocaust, ignoring the near universality of the human beings who perished in its horror; but to deny the place of priority it justly claims or, as in this case, omit all mention of it is an altogether different matter.

The attempt to undo that presumably unintended offense may have added to it. Meeting with representatives of Vienna's Jewish community, the pope's strongly worded and undoubtedly heartfelt acknowledgment of the Shoah, and his call for efforts to make certain it will never happen again, implied that this sacrifice of millions can be seen as part of divine redemption for all humankind. This may have gone too far. Whatever validity "Holocaust theology" may enjoy in the context of Judaism (where, in fact, it has become a matter of heated debate), it is not an application to be made by the principal spokesperson for Christianity.

It is interesting, and perhaps significant, that the NC News Service reports of the Austrian visit (at least as published in the two diocesan papers I have reviewed) made no mention at all of the Mauthausen stop and devoted only a sentence or two to the Vienna meeting. It was left to the secular press, also, to report what may have been another unfortunate aspect of the ever-present Waldheim problem. This is a matter of special interest and importance for me personally and may be discounted by the reader for bias.

As readers of this journal probably know, I was privileged to be the accidental "discoverer" of Franz Jaegerstaetter, an Austrian peasant beheaded in Berlin in 1943 for refusing to serve in Hitler's army. A devout Catholic—daily communicant and sacristan of the village church—he was convinced that the Nazi regime was immoral and its war unjust. Since the pope was scheduled for a stop in Enns, the city in which was located the induction center where Jaegerstaetter's fateful refusal had been made, I and others hoped the pope might use the occasion to make some acknowledgment of the martyr's sacrifice. Unfortunately he did not.

But it seems to have been much more of a possibility than even the most optimistic of us thought. The London *Times* (June 25), in a story datelined Mauthausen, tells of an almost frantic search to come up with an Austrian hero the pope could mention. According to this report, "The original idea was to beatify, or at least honor, a Christian conscientious objector, Franz Jaegerstaetter, during the pope's visit yesterday to Mauthausen." After summarizing Jaegerstaetter's story, the article continued, "As late as February Bishop Florian Kuntner was convinced that Austria had found a truly appropriate war hero." Then, worried messages came from Rome: "Apparently some of the Austrian hero's words had been manufactured after his death. Historical records show the martyr to have been a poorly educated, inarticulate man. And there was suspicion that he had acted politically and not solely out of Christian conviction."

Had anyone bothered to check, I could have assured them that every word attributed to the martyr in my book was taken from hand-written documents (in the old German script) in the possession of the widow and the village pastor. These included letters written from prison and a most remarkable *apologia* prepared by Jaegerstaetter at the request of the prison chaplain. He was "poorly educated," his formal education having ended at approximately our fifth-grade level; but he had spent much of his free time reading the Bible, devotional pamphlets, and—several times—the pastor's copy of a book about martyrs and saints.

"Inarticulate" he most certainly was not. Fellow villagers, interviewed in person, remember Jaegerstaetter as always speaking his mind and fervent in his denunciation of Hitler and the Nazi movement. That this opposition was politically motivated is beyond question, but this "political" motivation was linked to Jaegerstaetter's conviction that Hitler was an enemy of the Catholic church and, given time, would seek to destroy her. It should not have been too hard for our Polish pope to understand how difficult it can be to separate a truly Christian commitment from political implications when living under an aggressively anti-Christian totalitarian regime.

One can understand why the pope would have decided it was prudent not to go ahead with the plans to honor this martyr, but that does not make it any less an injustice that calls for papal

Franz Jaegerstaetter

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redress. My wounded professional ego is a minor concern; of much greater concern is the pain this must cause the heroic widow who still lives and has borne already too great a measure of such pain for forty-five years. At the very least the pope should initiate a thorough investigation of the facts of the case and, no less important, the sources of misinformation, and then make proper amends.

But there is more. One wonders about the ease with which these reports of Jaegerstaetter reached the ears of the pope and his advisers and their failure to check them before permitting the injustice to occur. Might it have been a question as to the wisdom of honoring a *conscientious objector* and thereby risking too direct a criticism of Waldheim who still insists that he did nothing more than his "duty" and that he had "no alternative"? That was Jaegerstaetter's situation also. But he understood *his* duty differently. For him, there was "no alternative" *but* to be true to the commands of conscience.

That point has yet to be grasped by many Austrians. A year ago the Bishop of Linz organized a three-day commemoration of what would have been Jaegerstaetter's eightieth birthday. For his pains, the bishop was roundly censured by veterans and their relatives for honoring a man who had "betrayed" and "abandoned" his fellow Austrians, thereby "demeaning" those who, like Waldheim, had done their "duty." Perhaps it was too much to expect, but had the pope used the occasion of his recent visit to emphasize the choice that must sometimes be made between the demands of nation and the obligation to follow Christ's teachings and example, a valuable and, given the nature of the world we live in today, much needed lesson would have been taught and the whole Austrian venture justified as much more than a purely ceremonial display. On the other hand—as the promoters of the tour undoubtedly would have pointed out—a "good show" might have been spoiled.

GORDON C. ZAHN

Gordon C. Zahn is the National Director of the Center on Conscience and War. A new edition of his In Solitary Witness: The Life and Death of Franz Jaegerstaetter *(Templegate) is available from the Center, 610 Rutherford, Charlestown, MA 02129.*

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

THE UNIVERSE & ME

THE PLEASURES OF RESENTMENT

A few days ago I walked toward an elevator and reached it at about the same time as a woman who was holding a child, aged, I guessed, around one-and-a-half or two. I pushed the button and the child looked at me furiously; I realized then that he had planned on pushing the button himself. He turned in his mother's arms and slapped her.

This struck me as a nice illustration of child logic: he wanted to push the button; this stranger did it instead; his mother is in charge of the universe and plainly messed up here; therefore she should be punished.

That isn't too far from adult logic, either. I have seen people turn on waitresses because, seconds before, they had spilled shrimp sauce on themselves, and I have been angry at objects (balky electric typewriters, unreasonable computer programs, even hairbrushes) which would not respond as I thought they should. None of this is far from infantile reacting, if indeed there is any difference at all. A lot of the way we experience the world is filtered through clouds of irritation, unreasonable expectations, fear, and all sorts of self-centered emotions and reactions which effectively keep us from experiencing what Caussade, in a lovely phrase, called "the sacrament of the present moment."

There has not been enough attention paid to the psychology of spirituality. Please don't write to tell me about William James's excellent *Psychology of Religious Experience*; I am not referring to studies of religion as a phenomenon. What we need is something which can be found occasionally in the desert fathers and in the *Philokalia*, as well as in some Buddhist writing. One Buddhist text, for example, refers to the feelings of aversion we experience when confronted, say, by the decaying corpse of an animal, as a form of anger directed at an object, unreasonable in the most profound sense. There are several sayings in the desert fathers to the effect that it is a greater work to conquer anger than to raise the dead. This applies not only to those forms of anger which are obviously outsized and wrong, like yelling curses at innocent but inept drivers, or berating a child, but also to the forms of anger we experience at political leaders, or the irritations encountered in the course of an ordinary workday.

The degree to which anger and resentment inform our inner lives would disturb us, I think, if we could see it clearly. The pleasures of resentment are nursed in some small degree by nearly everyone, and in large degree by many. To feel wronged is bracing, in a sour way, a form of pleasure-pain; and to feel that you are being kept from your rightful place by someone else (a parent, when you are adolescent, or a superior in a corporate or religious or governmental structure, when you are an adult), or by an unreasonable circumstance, allows the feeling that the world would be right if only it weren't for—whatever it may be; the pleasure is the same.

A lot of anger—a lot of the kind I have experienced, anyway—comes from the illusion that our time is literally ours, a thing we have a right to, a personal possession, and anyone whose demands mean that I will not get to use it as I wish

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will be resented. This is part of what I mean about the psychology of spirituality. An approach to this problem which says "You shouldn't be irritated at the unexpected phone call, the visitor you would rather not have dropped by without calling, the need a friend has for a ride—that isn't right or virtuous, and he or she too is a child of God, you should be grateful for the opportunity to serve others, etc." . . . that sort of moralism never got very far with me, because if I took it seriously I would go around thinking I deserved some credit for what, in a better person, would pass for simple decency. It also fails to get at the illusion which lies at the root of the irritation.

This illusion is the infantile one that the universe has been structured around what I see as my needs, and if it hasn't been, it should be. Until this illusion is shattered, even "good" uses of my time (things like putting up with someone who bores me, working voluntarily for an important social cause, etc.) are spiritually pointless—I am likely to think that it is good of me to do these things with "my time."

Morality, insofar as it means the self-conscious pursuit of virtue, could be the greatest enemy of spiritual understanding, short of distraction. To behave in a way which you know is moral—whether that means refraining from theft or adultery, or behaving in a positively "good" way, through the performance of a generous or courageous act—can reinforce the ego and protect us from self-awareness. I do not mean that we should not behave morally, only that we should not regard moral behavior as much more important than taking out the garbage. The fact that moral behavior can exist apart from prayer and asceticism ought to teach us that it is not particularly Christian, or religious. It is an important social necessity, a form of civility. Jesus says that after we have done everything we ought to do, we are still unprofitable servants. One meaning of this could be that morality, doing the right thing, is at most a by-product of spiritual understanding, not its point.

There is no doubt that we should behave morally, and what is being said here is not to be construed as an indifference to morality. But morality does occupy us too much, perhaps because it involves the things we can take care of ourselves, without our having to endure any vision of ourselves as completely inadequate, totally contingent. Where asceticism has been at its worst, where it has been most misunderstood, has been where it is concerned with moral action. Eastern Orthodox spirituality speaks of "guarding the heart"—that is, paying attention to what goes into the heart and how we respond to it. This should apply to everything we encounter, not just those things we tend to think of as spiritual or ethical.

Attention to the ways in which doing what at the most obvious level we *want* to do—our desire—leads us around, may show us how the thing we think of as liberating can actually be enslaving. How free are we if we feel we *must* be free to do something we want to do? When Eckhart says that our following of Christ means that we should first be aware of what we most want to do or are most inclined to do (and of course there is a distinction between the two), then refrain from doing it, and watch ourselves carefully—this is a great part of what he means. Only asceticism, a willingness to go against what seems to be the grain, can begin to show us the complex depths of that life, and can reveal the fact that desire and the fulfillment of desire are not necessarily the same thing as freedom. Self-denial can, in fact, be the beginning of true freedom.

The end of a prayerful life, the goal of asceticism, should be a clarity of understanding and activity which is denied us when we are incapable, because of distraction and self-involvement and webs of attachment, of simply being before God in the present moment. Saint Seraphim of Sarov addressed each person who came to him as "my joy," and meant it. (My response to too many people is, "You again?") Most of us are very far from being able to see others, to see creation itself, as God sees the universe at the moment of creation, knowing it, rejoicing in it, as good. □

WORLD WATCH

J. Bryan Hehir

1 HIT, 0 RUNS, 3 ERRORS

REAGAN ABROAD

The political news of the summer is dominated by conventions, campaigns, and candidates. Inevitably, a close second are the early assessments of the Reagan presidency and its policies. More than any president in recent memory, Mr. Reagan is judged apart from the policies of his administration. The persona of the president and his ability to strike a responsive chord in large sectors of the public generate simultaneously both positive evaluations and dissent from Reagan policies and programs.

When the policies are examined, certain criticisms, expressed since the early days of Reagan's presidency, persist. An example in foreign policy is the argument that the administration has constantly misinterpreted regional conflict by reading it through the lens of superpower competition. This assessment has been applied to Reagan policies from Southern Africa to Central America. The geopolitical or East-West definition of the regional conflicts is driven by a conviction that Soviet probes can be found behind most

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regional turmoil, and by a reluctance to take seriously the indigenous causes of conflict. The geopolitical view, in turn, is predisposed to address regional conflict with military means (primarily the support of resistance or insurgent groups), and to suspect diplomatic solutions which don't signal Western victories.

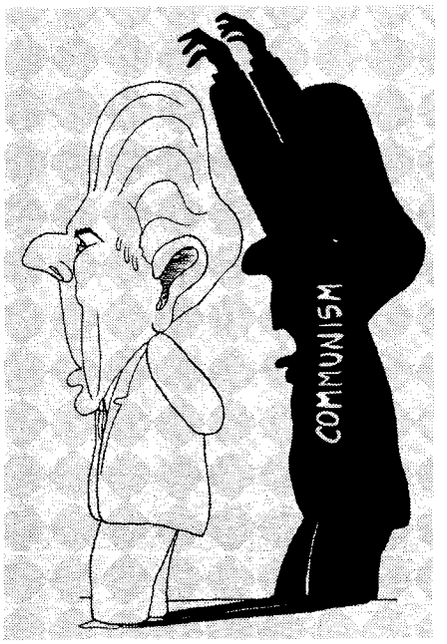
The persistence of this critique calls for an evaluation of the results of regional policies in the Reagan era. At this writing, the balance sheet, in my view, shows one significant success, two open cases, and three substantial failures.

The success is Afghanistan—at least the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the country. A principal factor in the withdrawal is the Gorbachev "new thinking" on Soviet commitments, but there is a broad consensus of opinion that U.S. support for a tough, determined, Afghan resistance made the Soviets pay too high a price for their occupation. The Afghanistan policy was also one of the few foreigh initiatives which have strong congressional support.

The open cases—it is not yet clear how they may work out—are Cambodia and Angola. At this writing multilateral diplomatic talks are being conducted which promise political solutions in both countries. Vietnamese troops have begun to leave Cambodia (more Gorbachev?), but the difficult diplomatic question is how to keep the Khmer Rouge out of power. The Angolan talks are particularly complicated, requiring both Cuban and South African troop withdrawals, further progress toward a solution for Namibia, and an address to the internal conflict within Angola. The United States is a significant player in all of these negotiations. One does not need to have been a supporter of the Reagan Doctrine or to believe that the havoc it has wreaked in some of its applications has been justified in order to hope that both of these open cases will find diplomatic resolution.

This leaves three major failures: South Africa, Central America, and the Middle East. In each area the basic critique of the Reagan regional policy seems quite on target. In each case the United States has forgone or forfeited opportunities in the last eight years to move conflict toward diplomatic resolution. In every case the East-West grid constrained and distorted U.S. policy choices. Even if Afghanistan is matched by positive outcomes in Cambodia and Angola, there is little chance that the Reagan legacy will leave the next president with anything but major problems in South Africa, Central America, and the Middle East. In each case the results of the Reagan years point to the need for major policy changes.

In South Africa a decade of "constructive engagement" has left the United States on the sidelines of the political process. The engagement has never been enough to pressure the South African government toward even political realism much less enlightened change. The price of the engagement has been a conviction among South Africa's black political leaders that U.S. policy was not "constructive," but rather collusion with the regime of apartheid. In the United States the executive branch lost control of South Africa policy in 1986 when Congress overrode a veto to press sanctions against South Africa. Since 1986 the policy stand-off within the United States has produced a policy vacuum regarding South Africa. A new start will require disowning "constructive engagement" and moving aggressively to regain some standing for the United States with representative black leaders in South Africa.



Policy change toward Central America needs to be equally drastic and deep. Here again, the administration and the Congress have been locked in a multiyear struggle over one piece of the Central American policy—aid to the *contras*—but the problem facing a new administration is much larger than this controverted tactic. The only sign of hope for peace which has surfaced in Central America in this decade has been President Arias's peace process for a regional settlement—within nations and among nations. The United States has given—at best—grudging support to his initiative. There are other obstacles to the Arias plan—not least the Sandinista government's refusal to recognize that democratization means that groups will use the democratic "space" which the agreement requires.

But the concept of the Arias plan points toward the only viable method of ending a decade of war and suffering in Central America. A new U.S. approach to Central America must be regional in scope, diplomatic in nature, and understood in terms which do not see internal change in the region as an inevitable threat to U.S. security interests.

Unlike South Africa and Central America, the Reagan administration, in the person of Secretary Shultz, has made a new initiative in the Middle East. After a long period of ignoring the region, the United States has put forward a proposal to restart the peace process. While several elements of the Shultz plan are sound and necessary, the judgment on it in the region seems to be too little, too late. Even as he presses his proposal, the secretary seems reconciled to a role of preparing the ground for the next administration. While continuity with the Shultz plan can be one dimension of the next U.S. initiative in the Middle East, events in the West Bank and the region as a whole require both greater U.S. clarity on Palestinian self-determination and probably recognition of some Soviet role in any approach to a regional settlement.

In sum, the Reagan administration's foreign policy record may yet claim more than one success, but future successes will require a quite different policy on at least three fronts. □

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A CONCENTRATION OF PURPOSE

THE ARTISTIC JOURNEY OF MARY GORDON

ROSEMARY BOOTH

"I guess as I began writing more and more and I began confronting in my writing a lot of the issues which really stemmed from my childhood, I began to see that I had a kind of religious hunger and that I had shaped many experiences in religious terms."
Mary Gordon
in *Once A Catholic*
by Peter Occhiogrosso

The poet Galway Kinnell has observed, "Everyone knows that human existence is incomplete. Among those who are especially troubled by this are those who turn to writing [which] is a way of trying to understand the incompleteness." Mary Gordon's work, more obviously than that of many writers, has evolved as a kind of investigation of this incompleteness. Her three novels—*Final Payments* (1978), *The Company of Women* (1980), *Men and Angels* (1985)—and book of short stories—*Temporary Shelter* (1986)—portray interior journeys of seeking. Religious issues have been the impetus for these travels, but not their end, for it is in the compelling nature of human affection and the artist's need to render it that the author finds resolution.

The "motion" in Mary Gordon's writings, her novels in particular, has gone from a focus on defining a spiritually adult self, to defining a female self, to defining a parenting, creating self. The process is an accretive one, like experience, so that the heroine of Gordon's latest novel, *Men and Angels*, is coping with a residue of issues faced by her predecessors in *Final Payments* and *The Company of Women*. By the same process, the author poses increasingly complex problems. *Men and Angels* thus involves an intricate calculus, one that will yield the answer to an old question: "What am I called to do?"—and its peculiarly twentieth-century corollary: "What are the balances to be struck?" If less satisfying as a novel than the earlier books, *Men and Angels* is also more ambitious in the scope of the questions it raises.

We see this development in the outpouring of themes that run like rivers through Gordon's novels and stories: the character of love; the sources of moral authority; the duty of parents; and the meaning (and demands) of sacrifice, intellectuality, passion or sensuality, loss, and creativity. The author launches these themes in terms of contrasts, contrasts between male and female, corporal and spiritual, Catholic and Protestant. Her characters often define themselves not by what they are, but by what they are not. Social class is less examined than alluded to, but is also a discernible motif.

The author's Roman Catholic background colors the terms of her arguments and accounts for the courts in which they are debated; that background also explains the seriousness and care with which her arguments are presented. Her heroines hone their own ethics—but in response to an accepted, orthodox mandate—to find a moral solution to their dilemmas. Their eventual understanding of charity, for example, may differ from the one they inherited (though the inheritance always affects how the subject is framed), but they cannot escape constructing a meaning that can be acted on in their own lives.

Mary Gordon says that she is interested in the novel "as a form of high gossip" and that "novels should be about people" (Diana Cooper-Clark, "An Interview with Mary Gordon," *Commonweal*, May 9, 1980). Her work, rooted in quotidian topics that carry great weight, from food to clothing, from phone calls to bus rides, reflects that bias. The stories abound in details supplied with the precision implied by a philosophical rootedness in the world and in things (e.g., a child in "Billy" is described as " 'spoiled' . . . a terrible word, suggesting meat gone iridescent"), but nothing is at a trivial level. Although Mary Gordon's writing reflects her belief that the function of the novel is to give pleasure, perhaps the overriding note of the texts is her earnestness of purpose. In the short story, "Now I Am Married," forty-year-old Gillian, a former schoolteacher, notes "Now I've gone back to writing. I don't know if I'm any good. I don't suppose it matters, really. It's a serious thing, and that's important." Over the decade of her writing, the questions which Gordon heroines confront have changed, but they all obey an urgent imperative to find satisfactory answers.

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Rosemary Booth's critical essay on Mary Gordon is the first in a series of articles on contemporary Catholic writers of fiction. We have asked our essayists to give an overview of an author's works, showing our readers where and how this writer locates the central human drama, the big questions, the religious crisis of our time. In the present case, what does the Catholic sensibility of a Mary Gordon have to tell us about our common world, about the state of our souls?

Mary Gordon's first novel, *Final Payments*, considers the overwhelming issue of establishing a self, distinct from one's parents, and, in particular, forming an independent moral conscience. The story follows thirty-year-old Isabel Moore in the months after her father's death, starting with his funeral. As in James Agee's *A Death in the Family*, all of the events are infused with the central fact of a father's dying. Unlike Agee's work, *Final Payments* is not elegiac in tone but forward-looking, a novel describing the aftermath of an event, not the prelude to it. Having been her father's sole caretaker for eleven years (and motherless since infancy), Isabel is suddenly free—compelled, really—to decide what she will do, where she will live, and, of crucial importance, who she will be.

Isabel searches desperately for an understanding of charity or love, of the way to relate to her fellow human beings, whom she must now engage. The fundamental choice she perceives (albeit an artificially stark one) is between the claims of the body and those of the spirit. Thus, she can indulge her nascent affections by lavishing them on those she genuinely loves, or she can follow what she recalls as the church's exhortation to a higher level of love through self-sacrifice. In the story, Isabel must choose between continuing an affair with Hugh, the (married) man she loves, and moving in with Margaret, who kept house for the family in the years following Mrs. Moore's death, until Isabel came of age and forced the housekeeper out. While the whole of Isabel's caring is for Hugh, she feels compelled—for a while, at any rate—to choose Margaret, to obey what she sees as the stronger moral imperative, that of expiating her father's death by renouncing sensuality and joy in her own life.

Perhaps a novelist raised as a Protestant would have selected a different set of options from these. I think it's also likely that many Catholic novelists would pose the issues differently. After all, in choosing to stay with Margaret, Isabel would have been obeying the letter of the law but not its spirit, hardly a sanctified choice—but this reading gets too tangled. Ultimately, of course, the decision is understood as a broader one (Margaret can be offered a less drastic sacrifice), and this broadening forms the crux of Isabel's growth. Isabel considers the higher calling—to love others "as God loves His creatures, impartially, . . . without wanting anything in return"—and rejects it in favor of love realized "in the body." In doing so, she acknowledges her need to be loved for herself alone, in her own body, and in that way accepts herself as human. Isabel essentially refuses austere sanctity in favor of flawed life. This spiritual maturation allows her to cast off at once the moral authority of an anonymous church ("the faceless priests who blessed my father's coffin") and her guilt over her father's death ("my father had died, but I had not killed him"). In turn, she accepts the role of a person liable to experience pain and loss, because she is willing to risk loving someone whose love she also desires in return.

Final Payments illustrates Mary Gordon's skill at characterizing dilemmas by the use of contrast. In this case, the distinction between the repulsive Margaret and the emerging Isabel sharpens the choice to be made, for Margaret carries the multiple burdens of superstitious beliefs, frumpy appearance, obsolete taste, and a whining demeanor. The descriptions of her are some of the best in the book:

> You can imagine how unbearable the brown patches on her skin—they were not moles but large, irregular in shape, like the beginning of a cancer—were to a child, or even worse, to an adolescent. . . . All her clothes seemed damp, as if her body were giving off a tropical discharge. . . . Her feet were flat as a fish, except where the bunions developed like small crops of winter onions. The sound of her slopping around the house in her slippers is the sound of my nightmares. . . . How I hated her method of waking me. . . . It was Margaret, always, knocking on my door like some rodent trapped behind a wall.

In finally rejecting the old woman's claims, Isabel embraces instead a world of youth, passion, and culture. Although Margaret had nominally been the Moore family housekeeper, it is clear that she had also served psychologically as Isabel's mother, and it was only by rebelling against her mores, attitudes, and even appearance that Isabel could grow up. Unlike Joseph Moore, who had been a professor, Margaret is not an intellectual; her unforgivable sin in the young woman's eyes is to speak disparagingly of Jane Eyre. From the first chapter, Isabel affirms this dichotomy: "Margaret's unattractiveness and stupidity made the shape of my life possible. I always knew who I was; I was not Margaret."

Isabel's rejection of Margaret is complete, down to the last details (diet, haircut), and her consequent growth is into an acceptance of herself as a passionate, intellectual, and, in the end, loving individual. Yet, because Margaret is also impoverished and dull, Isabel is also renouncing any identification with the social class she represents. Like the slovenly Mrs. Delehanty ("The Murderer Guest") or slatternly Mrs. Lynch ("The Neighborhood"), Margaret has a self so repulsive as to be grounds alone for rejection. At the same time, since her

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Catholicism is also of a lesser order (novenas and rosary beads rather than Latin missals and medieval paintings), refusing her is in effect a repudiation of a vulgar approach to religion.

If the heroine is *not* Margaret, who is she? Gender aside, she is clearly not identical with either of the two "fathers" in the story— the memory of Isabel's own father or the reality of his replacement, Father Mulcahy—who are intellectuals with passionate flaws. In fact, in shirking an alliance with Margaret, Isabel also discards the notions of the authoritarian spirituality she has imbibed from her father and the paternal priest.

The answer is more fully developed by Felicitas Taylor, the central character in *The Company of Women*. More rambling a story than *Final Payments*, this novel is also richer in its panoply of characters. The story takes place from 1963 through 1977. Its title invites two interpretations. In one sense, it means group, a reference to the band of five women who revolve like satellites (or disciples) around their energetic, dogmatic leader, Father Cyprian Leonard. One of the women has a daughter (but no husband, who died six months after the child was born), and it is the simultaneous development of this child from apprentice devotee to independent woman and of the priest from unassailable guru to admitted fellow traveler that forms the novel's plot. In a second sense, the title connotes companionship, an allusion to the mutual friendship which exists among the women. The two meanings converge in the corps itself, which is more than the sum of its members, who create, as the novel's epigraph suggests, a "common world between them."

In a 1981 interview, Mary Gordon described one of her themes in this novel as "the relationship between the male spiritual authority and the female" (Le Anne Schrieber, "A Talk with Mary Gordon," *New York Times Book Review*, February 15, 1981). On the one hand, there is Father Cyprian, the passionate absolutist, prescribing a view of the world; on the other, there are his middle-aged acolytes, forming among themselves a kind of composite woman. Like Mrs. Hastings in "The Magician's Wife," the women absorb a feeling of privilege simply by association with the magicmaker.

Though none of the women themselves is remarkable, the collective weight of their personalities compels Felicitas's attention: "When all of them came together, they were something." The women are not driven by an ideal, like Cyprian, but rather by their needs, which are ordinary. Their habits vary, from a coarse earthiness, to a penchant for fine goods, to a love of literature, but the sights of all five are fixed on things of the world and they offer models of everyday nurturance. Felicitas is drawn to defining herself in relation to this corporate matriarchy as distinct from the priest, her relentless spiritual mentor, who, ignoring her sex, had singled the girl out to inherit his mantle.

The portraits of the women are wonderfully drawn, neither effusive nor restrained. In their complicated individuality they are sisters to the women in several of Mary Gordon's short stories, "Now I Am Married," "Delia," "Agnes," or "Eileen." By contrast, Cyprian appears a creature of his tenets and philosophy, and his attraction comes from the authority of the dogma he preaches and its mesmerizing exhortations to heed a bygone tradition. The priest's words resemble those of the American followers of the conservative Archbishop Lefebvre, once described by Mary Gordon as opposing all the elements of modernism, from atheism and communism to liberalism, socialism, and democracy ("More Catholic Than the Pope; Archbishop Lefebvre and a Romance of the One True Church," *Harper's*, July 1978).

Through her exposure to a decadent academic-hippie "group" that parodies the Cyprian discipleship, Felicitas grows skeptical of the priest's position and the women's role in perpetuating it. Subsequently, by deciding to bear the child she unwittingly conceives (and whose father is never known), Felicitas signals her decision to join the women, to accept her role as one of them. Ironically, it is by thwarting Cyprian's plans for her as a surrogate son—someone different from the women because intellectual, unsentimental, and independent—that Felicitas gains the moral authority she needs to confront the priest as an equal. She comes to recognize his limitations. "He had three ideas," she concludes, "the authority of the church, the corruption induced by original sin, and the wickedness of large-scale government. All the rest is instinct and effusion." This recognition in turn frees her to adopt Cyprian's intensity of conviction, his "compelling sense of the ideal" (*New York Times Book Review*, February 15, 1981), and adapt it for her own imaginative use.

It's hard not to compare Felicitas's perceptions about Cyprian with a feminist perspective on the Catholic church: Here is the elderly priest, whose word is taken without question by his pious handmaidens, dictating their very life choices, even as he derides their "womanish" religion. The shakeup (such as it is) comes about almost by biological accident—Cyprian is confronted with the fact of Felicitas's pregnancy, and the recognition forces him to accept her femininity. Felicitas's child, who turns out to be a girl (Linda), ultimately augments the female ranks, and in the end Cyprian finds himself "surrounded by the muffling, consoling flesh of women . . . dragged . . . down to the middling terrain of their conception of the world, half blood instinct, half the impulse of the womb." Instead of adhering to his old ideal of "objective or impersonal" love, he will now be "pulled down by the irresistible gravity of affection and regard."

With Cyprian's capitulation comes a change in the women, too, who must face the end to one kind of ordering in their lives—that provided by a heretofore unassailable leader. They offer varying observations on this development, which can also be read as a spectrum of comments on changes in the church during the sixties and seventies. Felicitas's mother, the practical Charlotte, for example, is unfazed by what has happened, remarking: "You could look at us and say, There they are, five old women waiting for an old man to die . . . [but] we're a lot better off than a lot of people." Elizabeth, who spends her days reading poetry, sees the end (and Cyprian's eventual death) "in terms of the breakup of the neighborhood"

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and prays, "Let things stay as they are." Clare sees herself as "the end of the line, the last of a dying race" and mourns the end of reverence for "formal rules." While Cyprian feels defeated by the ascendancy of the female principle and its destruction of his moral ideal, the older women are nostalgic but more or less at peace over it. Felicitas admits to a defiant agnosticism but is philosophical, while her daughter, Linda, is jubilant at the new order: "I am running toward them. They are standing under the apple tree. My mother picks me up and holds me in her arms. My grandmother is laughing. My mother lifts me up into the leaves. We are not dying."

In *The Company of Women* Mary Gordon has developed a heroine who secures a female self by acknowledging the strengths and cadences of women and by accepting the fleshly, emotional side of human life. Just as Isabel needed to reject the role of martyr in order to take part in human events, so Felicitas had to refuse that of priest (the isolated, cerebral being) in order to embrace life as a woman. However, the new woman is not permitted one indulgence granted the old—that of dependence on a man. Instead, her maternity brings into relief her responsibility to protect others. "All the people I love are frailer than I," says Felicitas. "There is no person . . . for whom I do not have to watch out, who can take physical charge even for a little while. And if the physical charge is mine, the moral charge must be mine also."

Men and Angels again examines the theme of woman's spiritual role. Laura Post, a self-anointed prophet who preaches the perils of the flesh, is absorbed into the household of art historian Anne Foster, who hires her as a babysitter for her two children. Anne is enraptured with motherhood. The surface struggle is between Laura's and Anne's views of what matters in life: obedience to the spirit (articulated by Laura) or attention to the needs of the flesh (embodied in Anne's children and in her own sexual desires). But in fact a third viewpoint intrudes, that of the neglected, talented, early-twentieth-century painter, Caroline Watson.

Anne is hired to write the catalogue notes for an exhibit of Caroline's work, and the duty to one's art or creative calling becomes one of the elements she must reconcile.

It is a particularly poignant issue for a woman, as Mary Gordon herself must realize, because of the conflicting demands posed by children and creative work, such as writing. "Caroline was a woman and had a child and had created art; because the three could be connected in some grammar, it was as though the pressure to do so were one of logic." Caroline had succeeded in creating great works of art, an achievement Anne admires. At the same time, she faults Caroline for neglecting her son, whom she more or less abandoned and who died young. The development that must occur in Anne, then, is to build a life that tends to multiple dimensions: the needs of her husband and children; the demands of her own body and soul; and the exigencies of her art, the work she is completing on Caroline Watson.

The needs of her husband and particularly her children seem primary. Anne enjoys a "primitive" exultation in her children's bodies, "flesh and flesh, bone, blood connection," and believes her primary charge is "to keep her children safe." In this outlook, she resembles other Gordon characters, such as the wife and mother in "Safe," who says of her husband and baby, "It must be the shape of my life to keep them at least from the danger I could bring them." Yet after the violent upheaval of Laura's suicide, Anne recognizes that even if she expends all of her energies to protect her children, she will not succeed, for they will necessarily be exposed to events without her, some of them dangerous and all of them carrying risk. In her turn, although she is a mother, she takes part in activities that do not involve her children, realizing that a mother's love is "not all of life."

Another dimension that engages the author's imagination in *Men and Angels* is the purely spiritual, personified in the ill-fated Laura. The babysitter moves into the Foster household with the intention of teaching the family "that the flesh was nothing; a mother and her children, all that famous love, was nothing more than flesh to flesh, would drown them all, would keep them from the Spirit." As for marriage, "the idea of it disgusted her: choosing a partner for the urges of the flesh, in filth creating children to be hurt and caused to suffer." As the personification of a radical attitude—that the only reality worth pursuing is a spiritual one—Laura is understandable, but as a character she comes across as too thin and bloodless to compel attention. Because she commands so little sympathy, it is hard to feel the attraction of the spiritual perspective that she is intended to represent. Nevertheless, Laura's presence is ubiquitous (every other chapter of the twelve-chapter novel is told from her point of view) and we are forced to notice her, most graphically by her self-slaughter at the novel's conclusion.

Laura is like a young Margaret (of *Final Payments*), if Margaret were inclined to proselytize. Like Margaret, she lacks love but cannot even command pity, for she exerts no effort to make herself lovable. As a result, it is difficult to feel Anne's guilt and torment at not having loved Laura (or, by

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implication, having attended enough to her own spiritual needs), for even in life the babysitter seems ghostlike, an anemic imitation of a person. Anne's failure to love Laura, which precipitates the girl's suicide, is even less understandable as a failure of charity than Isabel's disdain of Margaret, for Laura is not only single-minded, but also mute and her hopes, verbalized silently, are seldom shared.

The most credible part of Anne's struggle is in the realm of her work, which she finds absorbing in a different way from her relationships with her family or Laura. Unlike the subjects of Anne's earlier research, Caroline Watson takes hold of the historian's feelings so that in writing about her Anne comes to see her task as that of "build[ing] a house for the woman she loved." This realization moves catalogue-writing from the category of job to that of vocation, one in which Anne will try to discover the soul of her subject and thus enlighten herself. The product must not only be faithful to Keats's dicta—true and beautiful—but faithful to Anne's feelings, an expression of love. The process of writing promises at the same time to increase Anne's understanding of how to reconcile her own creative needs with her responsibilities to her husband and children. Some distance from them would be required, some cost in closeness. "The truth of the matter was that for a woman to have accomplished something, she had to get out of the way of her own body," Anne observes. "This was the trick people wanted to know about. Did she pull it off? . . . One wanted to believe that the price was not impossible, . . . that there were fathers, husbands, babies, beautifully flourishing beside the beautiful work. For there so rarely were."

In her essay, "The Fate of Women of Genius" (written as an introduction to a special edition of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and published in the *New York Times Book Review*, September 13, 1981), Mary Gordon wrote:

> Woolf's sense of the writer's vocation is religious in its intensity. The clarity of heart and spirit that she attributes to writers like Shakespeare and Jane Austen, who have expressed their genius "whole and entire," demands a radical lack of self and ego that might be required of a saint. Yet the writer cannot, for Woolf, work to be rid of the self.

The qualities that are called for in a writer, Gordon notes in the same essay, require an absence of personal grievance. She lists these qualities as "[s]erenity, selflessness, freedom from rage [words which] recall the mystics' counsels," but which in Virginia Woolf's case (and in Mary Gordon's) include an appreciation for the body and its pleasures. The artist—perhaps especially the woman artist—remains an outsider. She is like the narrator, Nora, in several of Mary Gordon's short stories, one of whose legs is shorter than the other and who feels herself odd and conspicuous as a result. Disclosure and consequent shame remain a constant possibility. However, in observing the damaged Agnes in a story of the same name, Nora realizes that, in spite of her handicap, "it might be possible to live a life of passion." What is called for in the artist (or writer) is not to remain aloof from passion, but to capture it in her art.

In the end, Anne recognizes too that her work will require a singularity of vision. She must achieve this, not by abdicating her role as wife and mother (nor by forswearing sensual pleasure) but by undertaking her writing task with a concentration of purpose. If Isabel Moore's fulfillment came through rejecting the role of victim, and Felicitas Taylor's in spurning that of priest, Anne Foster succeeds by accepting a calling akin to that of prophet, not in a religious sense (like Laura), but as someone proclaiming life, in its terrible as well as shining dimensions. She acknowledges in the end her resolve to begin, to:

> take her mind, sharpen it, make it single . . . [to] take the facts that she had learned, the words that there were for them. Join them together. . . . She would write . . . [h]ard words, formed words, white stones that she could hold and separate. And then, refreshed, she could dive back down to the dense underworld, to her children, and say, "This is life. What shall we make of it?"

From Isabel Moore to Felicitas Taylor and Anne Foster, the central figures in Mary Gordon's novels reflect a kind of early imprinting with the form and habit of asking religious questions, so that they can never quiet them later, but only dull their sound or attempt to ignore it. She presents people who have been permanently marked with a spiritual dimension. In the vividness of her characters and in the seriousness of their questionings, Mary Gordon has constructed an involving set of works, one that describes the intricacies of a moral life, in terms not exclusive to women but especially compelling for them. Finally, her books reflect Virginia Woolf's exhortation to the woman writer, "Above all, you must illumine your own soul." □

SCREEN

MYTH AMERICA

'TUCKER' & 'BULL DURHAM'

Tucker's strengths and faults are inseparable. The film is unique—the product of the fertile inventiveness of Francis Ford Coppola at his best and brashest. Moments of brilliant style and flash are paralleled by a loud, off-putting reliance on every film device except character. No one has ever accused Coppola (maker of successes like *Apocalypse Now* and *The Godfather* and daring flops, such as *One from the Heart*) of taking easy routes to success. They won't with *Tucker* either.

Tucker weaves myth around an actual episode in industrial history. It tells the story of a maverick inventor who, in the late 1940s, tried to challenge Detroit automakers with an unusually designed car, having both advanced engineering (a streamlined look, rear motor, fuel injection system) and advanced safety features (seatbelts, pop out windows, and three head-

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James Cole

The Remains of Cong Abbey

Over a rat's nest of crosses
we climbed the few steps
half lost in thought
and half asleep in the sun,

intimate and smooth
like water on the field,
the animals calm—
as though we had emerged

from backbreaking depths
where the only light
was the Light of the World,
its sweet surfaces in the dark.

lights—one in the middle—to provide greater surface coverage at night). Tucker (Jeff Bridges) not only predates Naderite consumerism, in a court scene near the close of the film, he stunningly predicts the decline of our auto industry: "If you let big business block inventors like me, in thirty years we'll be buying our radios and cars from our former enemies."

At its best, *Tucker* synthesizes compelling personal drama and populist sentiment. According to accounts by car enthusiasts, Coppola has the basic story right: Tucker made some management mistakes, but his failure resulted from sabotage by a Detroit threatened less by his engineering than by his emphasis on safety. Like *Wall Street*, another thoughtful but deeply flawed film, *Tucker* pushes film treatment of technology and business beyond both simplistic anticapitalist satire and blind (*Dallas*-like) worship of greed. The hero combines public responsibility and creative entrepreneurship, as if Coppola had just read *In Search of Excellence*. Care for consumers, the film says, can enhance profit—if only (alas) competitors play fair.

Coppola's style, however, gets in the way. Shot with a "forties" look to match style with content, *Tucker* begins as an exuberant promo newsreel with a basso narrative voice-over. Many scenes are slyly cut to provide instant elisions in the narrative and a steady, pulsing, dramatic pace; big band tunes add to the driving tempo. Phone calls are shot split-screen, often with a comic-book dividing-line between speakers. Cartoon style also infuses the photography, with frequent shots from low angles to accent the "larger-than-life" aspects of the hero. This general exclamatory mood also dominates the sets and acting.

Amid this stylized overstatement, there is one small mistake and major flaw. Coppola films an early road scene, supposedly in Ypsilanti, Michigan, with a mountain backdrop—no doubt near the studios of producer George Lucas in San Francisco. But that gaffe is minor compared to Coppola's persistent flamboyance; a scene where Tucker serves some rare roast beef might symbolize his creator's own extreme tastes. Coppola tries too hard to make his films rare—so rare they become self-obsessed. Like many California film-school directors (Lucas, Spielberg, Scorcese), Coppola gets lost in style at a cost to character. As their work "matures," it has become clear that these directors can't develop deep character unless guided by a strong source (in Coppola's successful films, Conrad and Puzo), which saves them from filmic excess. Although Coppola is the best of these directors, even he doesn't have enough background in drama to ballast his delight in surface tricks and texture.

As a result, Bridges's best scene comes only at the end of *Tucker*; worse, his handling is uneven throughout. Sometimes Coppola makes him resemble a Faust; more often he strains to make us like Tucker too much. Despite anti-Japanese feeling, he employs a Nisei engineer; he involves his family (in an inspirational way) in his work; he mock-threatens an innovative employee, "If you ever do that again, I'll—give you a raise!" Eventually Bridges's Tucker fails to surprise because Coppola makes him persistently surprising. His values are real, but you get your nose rubbed in them too often.

Sentimental scenes between Bridges and the supporting cast are also uneven, especially those with Martin Landau as Bridges's financial adviser and best friend. Tucker's wife (Joan Allen) is fortunately no pale flower, but a tough cookie with a Veronica Lake haircut; his daughter (Nina Ciemaszko) and crew (especially engineer Elias Koteas) are also good as vibrant free spirits. Coppola (always strong on the theme) makes Tucker's entourage into an extended family; he dedicates the movie to his dead son, Gio, "who loved cars."

Coppola is even more involved. The film recalls his youth in the forties, when, a Midwesterner, he learned the story at his father's knee. He strongly identifies with Tucker: just switch industries, and recall Coppola founded a studio (Zoetrope) that failed. Like Tucker, he may not have the luck, or depth, to imitate David. But at least he believes people will buy better products than those provided by Philistine giants.

Bull Durham is colorful, wacky, and brilliantly written—the first smart baseball movie. A brainy, bawdy romp through a season in the minors, the film is set in the picturesque Carolina League, and features a fictional version of the team owned by one producer, Thom Mount. It was written and directed by Ron Shelton, a former second baseman in the Oriole farm system, who has peppered it both with baseball terms like "flares," "quails," and "groundballs with eyes," along with quotes from Blake, Gray, and Whitman.

The hybrid language is nicely divided. The romantic poetry comes mostly from Annie Savoy (Susan Sarandon) a part-time English teacher and full-time post-hippie who "worships in the church of baseball." She follows the team as an over-age groupie with a self-appointed pagan priestess role of breaking in the rookies in bed. Baseball lingo comes from a grubby,

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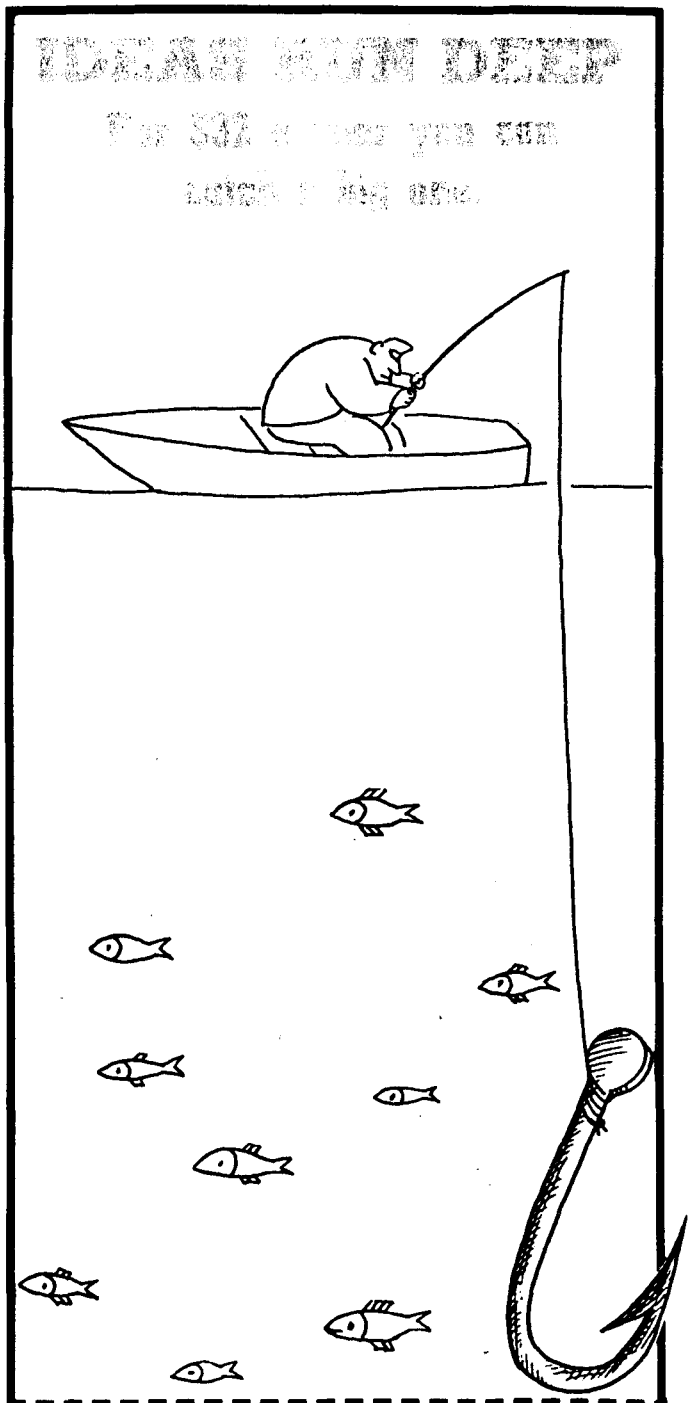

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hard-nose catcher, "Crash" Davis (Kevin Costner), whose job is to instill horse sense about the game in the arrogant young firearm "Nuke" Lalosh (Tom Robbins). Naturally they squabble about who has more to teach the "kid." Savoy/Sarandon, Ms. Know-It-All, pops off on quantum physics and reincarnation, which prompts Costner's best rejoinder. His phrases are locker-room lewd (and perhaps offensive), but often brilliant, especially when he recites his "creed."

The acting is delicious, with Robbins excellent as a dolt with talent. Costner and Sarandon neatly execute a Benedict-and-Beatrice sexual ballet of hostility and eros. Costner's performance comes complete with a real switch-hitting swing and a dignified world-weariness. Sarandon enjoys herself to no end in her "bad girl" role. Although dedicatedly unchaste, she is also archly witty; just see how she reads Whitman to the ballplayers. Her scene listening to Edith Piaf is acted with fine mock-heroic pathos.

Sarandon's role has plausibility problems; major information on her character comes late. But no recent film has been more truthful about a sport: the by-play about "religion" is not allowed to sink the film, as in *The Natural*. Myth works in *Bull Durham* because it grows around the plot as quietly as outfield grass. Superstitions about what to wear on a winning streak abound. Heaven is "the Show," the major leagues, where Nuke might end up if he will only listen to the sage, Crash, who was there "for twenty-one days," there where the stadiums are "big as cathedrals." The minors only have Bartles and Jaymes ads on distant fences. Disappointed, Crash has to swallow his pride and hunker down after Nuke finally makes "the Show" where Crash believes he should be. "The world," Annie says, "is made for those without the curse of self-awareness." Surprisingly, the best poetry in *Bull Durham* is not romantic but realistic. TOM O'BRIEN

STAGE

UPSIDE-DOWN IN SWEDISH

'HAMLET' & 'MACBETH'

"Do you understand Bengali?" the manager asked as I entered a theater in New Delhi a few years ago. Full of professional hubris, I answered, "No, but I understand theater." As often happens when I face unfamiliar plays in unfamiliar languages, I had no trouble following the plot. The meat of this play, however, was its verbal jokes and, as I sat silently amid the laughter of the audience, a sickly grin on my face, I came to understand the manager's question.

My Indian misadventure came to mind recently when I went to see Ingmar Bergman's Brooklyn Academy of Music production of *Hamlet* in Swedish, after having read an interview (*New York Times*, June 5) in which the director dismissed the

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language problem by describing how moved he was by a Russian film in which he had no idea what was going on. Perhaps my difficulty with *Hamlet* was that I knew what was going on, but that, sentence by sentence, I often did not know what was being said. Bergman's glosses on the play, visual images primarily, were not difficult to grasp, but the play too often slipped through the directorial aperçus. When Peter Stormare's athletic Hamlet knocked Ophelia around, like a wife abuser having a good day, I understood that he was telling her to get thee to a nunnery with a vengeance, but more often I wanted to know what line he was on so that I could tell whether the actor's emphasis was gratuitous (as it often was when Nicol Williamson and/or Richard Burton played the role) or making some point beyond a display of his frenetic energy. My misgivings about Stormare's highly praised performance were heightened when he lay flat on his back, his head tipped over a step, and delivered a soliloquy while his upside-down head eyed the audience. This was a device that Jonathan Miller imposed on his leading actor at the Greenwich Theatre in 1974 in what I still think of as the silliest *Hamlet* I have ever seen. With no command of Swedish, I never knew whether I was mistakenly assigning Stormare to the wrong crowd, the words-without-meaning Hamlets who sing or eat their speeches for effects that have little to do with Shakespeare's lines.

As for Bergman's more obvious inventions, many of them would have seemed doubtful in any language. An outrageous reading can sometimes provide a startling sense of rightness to a character or a scene, but—unless a play is taken as a series of unrelated images—there should be some interconnection. If there was a defining line running through Bergman's production, I missed it. Take three problem images:

- Early in the play, before the first court scene, Claudius and Gertrude circled around the stage in a playful sexual romp, middle-aged lust that underlined what compelled them to murder. When the all-purpose chorus, dressed in red and white, formed a semicircle around them and, led by Polonius, applauded ritually, were we to take the business as a comment on the lubriciousness of the court, the flattery of underlings, or a reminder that this is a play?
- Ophelia spent a good part of the play on-stage, hovering just outside the circle in which a scene was being played. She was even on hand to watch her own funeral. Are we to assume that she was the motivation for most of the play's action?
- If this were somehow a love play that had gone awry, what were to make of the ending in which Fortinbras and his thugs burst in, machine guns chattering, and dragged Horatio to an off-stage execution? It was a nice satiric idea that Fortinbras's final praise of Hamlet be delivered as false humility for TV cameras, but unless the play be taken simply as good clean (or not so clean) fun, there seemed no point to it.

There were things to admire in the production. Ulf Johanson was a wonderfully comic Polonius, having developed an eccentric sideways step which let him approach everyone and everything crabwise. Jan Waldekranz's Horatio went a long way toward explaining Hamlet's attachment to that usually tedious character by playing him as a knockabout college chum who shared Hamlet's wit and foolishness, if not his melancholy. It was always interesting to watch, to see what was going to come next, but *Hamlet* should leave the playgoer exclaiming, "Oh, yes," not muttering, "Oh, come on."

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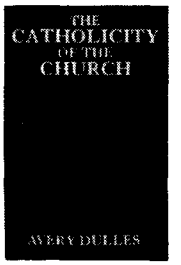

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One of the reasons *Hamlet* looked as good as it did was that Christopher Plummer and Glenda Jackson had come to town for a limited run in a *Macbeth* that had no redeeming feature. Plummer, as Macbeth, seemed as embalmed as he does in *The Sound of Music*, and his sonorous recitation of the lines had the intellectual depth of a trainman calling destinations by rote. Jackson, who may have had something in mind about Lady Macbeth, settled for meaningless gestures like putting her arms rigidly to her sides and turning her palms outward presumably to convey determination or retching in the background, perhaps to indicate that this was a production that made her want to throw up. Alan Scarfe seemed at first to find a character in Macduff, but when he hit his first big speech, he seemed to say, oh, what the hell, and began to declaim it as though this were prize day at an English public school. Clearly the most exciting thing about *Macbeth* was the backstage battle in which one director after another bit the dust as the production dragged its way toward New York, but there was no way to put that on-stage. We were left with the ruins of a good casting idea. Perhaps they should have played it in Swedish.

GERALD WEALES

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Judaism: The genius of self-renewal

JOHN T. PAWLIKOWSKI

Jacob Neusner is the most prolific and wide-ranging author on the Jewish scene today. He has produced major scholarly analyses of traditional Jewish biblical and rabbinic materials (often applying contemporary scientific methods to them for the first time), and also acted as a popular teacher of Judaism for a nonscholarly community. He has joined scholarly and popular discussions of the meaning of the Jewish tradition today, especially in America. And now in *Death and Birth of Judaism*, he has ventured out to assess Christian and Jewish interactions in the modern world.

The books reviewed here expose us to the full range of Neusner's interests and reveal how masterful he is in each area. The first two, on the Bavli (the Babylonian version of the Talmud) and on "Leviticus Rabbah," continue his scientific treatment of formative texts in classical Judaism, are quite technical, and will prove challenging for anyone not conversant with modern scientific methods of textual exegesis. The third title, also a scholarly work but not as daunting as the previous two volumes, focuses primarily on Judaism's adaptation to a new social situation: the emergence of Christianity as the dominant religion of the empire with the conversion of Constantine. Like the first two volumes, this book is written in a reasonably lively style for its genre. Unlike the previous two volumes, it can be taken up by the nonscholar. The fourth title outlines Judaism's shaping by Christianity, its confrontation with modernity, with secularism and the Holocaust. *Death and Birth of Judaism* has the broadest appeal of the volumes discussed here. For anyone concerned with the ongoing problem of relating classical religion to the worldviews of the modern era, Neusner's perspective will prove intriguing. He offers an overview of Judaism's successes and failures, and also suggests possible future directions. The final volume deals with the ongoing significance of Jewish ritual. It offers rewarding possibilities for a general audience, as well as for liturgists, whether the scholarly or the pastoral. With the growing awareness of the profound impact of Second Temple Judaism on Jesus and apostolic Christianity, Neusner's reflections on basic Jewish celebrations (such as the Seder and circumcision) which undergird the Christian sacramental tradition will prove extremely useful. These volumes reveal a person of sound scholarship, wide literary talent, and uncanny insight into the faith/modernity problem. His writings deserve greater exposure in Christian circles.

Books By Jacob Neusner

The Enchantments of Judaism: Rites of Transformation from Birth through Death. *Basic Books, $15.95, 224 pp.*

Judaism: The Classical Statement: The Evidence of the Bavli. *University of Chicago, $37, 270 pp.*

Judaism and Scripture: The Evidence of Leviticus Rabbah. *University of Chicago, $50, 641 pp.*

Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine. *University of Chicago, $27.50, 246 pp.*

Death and Birth of Judaism: The Impact of Christianity, Secularism, and the Holocaust on Jewish Faith. *Basic Books, $21.95, 380 pp.*

Turning to the individual volumes, Neusner's redactional interpretation of the Babylonian Talmud offers solid background information on the sources, organization, and composition of the Bavli. His creative insight comes in what follows. He discusses the relationship of the Bavli to the Mishnah and especially the earlier version of the Talmud, the Yerushalmi (Jerusalem Talmud). Neusner finds the Bavli superior to the earlier edition of the Talmud, since only the Bavli has managed to produce a synthesis between the Mishnah and the Hebrew Scriptures. This synthesis in turn opens possibilities for the ongoing renewal of the Jewish tradition. Even in this fairly narrow, scholarly treatise, Neusner brings to the fore one of his overarching themes: how can a classical religious tradition find authentic room for meaningful expression in the context of modernity in which the rational, technological mindset has seized the intellectual and cultural throne? For Neusner, such an examination must lead to constructive participation in contemporary society and not merely isolation.

Judaism and Scripture is part of the same general series of textual commentaries. In addition to the commentary, it contains the first English translation of "Leviticus Rabbah." Again, technical material is present in abundance. The creative element consists in Neusner's demonstration of how the rabbis used biblical books, such as Leviticus, to open up new insights for the changed circumstances in which the Jewish community later found itself. Again his basic

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motif of the self-renewing capacity of the Jewish tradition emerges. The methodological examples set by the rabbis may prove far more helpful for us today than the particular content of their reflections. They helped give credence to the *selective* use of Scripture, based on altered social needs and conditions. The rabbis showed how Scripture could "provide a source of paradigms, the opposite of a one-time event." Neusner's perspectives here dovetail with the growing emphasis on local theologies found in the writings of such Christian theologians as my CTU colleague, Robert Schreiter.

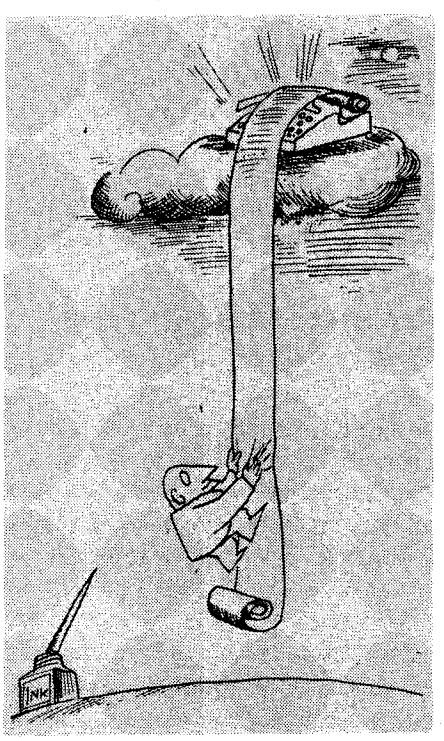
In *Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine*, Neusner challenges the notion that Judaism developed in splendid isolation after Christianity's sudden entrance into imperial power. Anything but isolation was the real picture. In fact, the Jewish pattern of reaction/adaptation to external political pressures was set at this time. Jewish identity, however much this might be denied by the Jewish leadership of a particular age, was actually determined by the prevailing political climate of the time, at least in the West. Neusner's principal focus here is on the works of the Christian theologians Eusebius, Aphrahat, and John Chrysostom. He compares and analyzes them on the central themes of history, Messiah, and Israel with the Talmud of the Land of Israel, the Genesis Rabbah, and the Leviticus Rabbah. He notes that the conclusions reached in this ancient polemical dialogue shaped the relationship between the two religions for their subsequent shared history in the West.

There is little on which to fault Neusner in his presentation of this early period. The only point might be some needed acknowledgment of a transitory moment of more authentic dialogue in medieval Spain. But that, of course, was followed by the horror of the Inquisition.

Death and Birth of Judaism brings us to the time when the first challenges to the "dual Torah" tradition—created by rabbinic Judaism in response to the new imperial power of Christianity—begin to surface. Again, however, the emerging re-definitions were the direct result of significant changes in Christianity. With the onset of the American and French revolutions, "Christianity lost its status as self-evident truth to Christians in parts of the West. . . ." This, in turn, resulted in the concomitant loss of the hold upon Jews of the self-identification forged out of Judaism's encounter with classical Christian truth claims. Out of this vacuum, several systems of Jewish self-consciousness emerged, the most prominent being the Reform, the Orthodox, and finally the Conservative Judaisms. All had to grapple not only with the issue of internal identity, but with the question of Jews as citizens of the new pluralistic nation-states that arose in Europe and North America.

The realities of the twentieth century necessitated further adaptation in Jewish identity as economic dislocation, nationalism, world wars, and a virulent anti-Semitism buffeted the Jewish community. *Death and Birth* takes us through the various responses that developed, including Zionism, yiddishism, Jewish socialism, and post-Holocaust theology. While many of these responses were hostile to the Jewish religious tradition, they sought a form of "redemption" in the Jewish experience.

Three other points need to be made regarding *Death and Birth*, and indicate the value of this volume beyond the Jewish community. The first is Neusner's



contention that the various Judaisms he examines—both the ancient Judaism of the "dual Torah" as well as the nineteenth- and twentieth-century forms—began with their own time and place and only then went on to search for a usable past that could undergird the directions that the present seemed to dictate. Second, Neusner understands religion not only as a set of beliefs, but as a decisive fact of social reality. The fundamental critical issue is "the relationship between religious ideas and the circumstances, in particular in politics, of the society that holds them: the interplay, therefore, of religious contents and political and social context." Finally, Neusner regards the Jews as a paradigm for humanity's struggle as a whole. His analysis of the various Judaisms over the centuries has something significant to contribute, he believes, to the study of religion in general and in a special way to the development of Western religion in the modern and contemporary periods.

In *Death and Birth* Neusner has presented a most challenging interpretation of the history of Judaism. I fundamentally agree with his argument that it has value for anyone dealing with the religion/society problem. In many ways the Jewish community preceded Catholicism, and even Protestantism (outside very limited theological circles with little impact on actual faith practice), in confronting the issues of modernity. It is not surprising that at a Christian/Jewish/Muslim dialogue at the Pontifical University in Salamanca, Spain, in 1986, several Western European Muslim speakers said their fundamental interest in Judaism was in learning from Jewish successes and failures in shaping an identity as a minority in a pluralistic society.

There remain, however, questions about the directions Neusner seems to take in this volume. Although Neusner admits that his notion of the various Judaisms is very much in a formative phase, there are a number of omissions which need to be included in a truly comprehensive picture: the experience of Oriental Jewry; the world of Jewish mysticism; the achievement of a common framework of interreligious discourse in medieval

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Spain (something David Burrell has brought to the fore in recent writings); and the impact of the contemporary Christian-Jewish dialogue. And the central thrust of Neusner's analysis, that basic myths are not that crucial in shaping a particular form of religious expression, needs serious consideration.

Neusner's approach is definitely nondogmatic. Even the Exodus myth does not emerge for him as an important, continuing shaper of Jewish identity. As I noted earlier, while this may be good grist for the mill of local theologies, there is almost the insinuation in Neusner that all theologies ought to be localized responses to changing times and circumstances. I am not saying with certainty that this is what he holds. One of the problems, even in *Birth and Death*, is that Neusner's personal view is never clearly set forth. For example, is Neusner recommending that the selection of religious myths be dictated primarily by political circumstances? If so, most Christians, including liberal theologians, will find that, without further refinement, such a thesis is unacceptable.

Neusner's own perspective on how to shape Jewish consciousness today emerges most clearly in *The Enchantments of Judaism*. It is through participation in Jewish ritual—rather than any particular classical myth of Jewish identity—that the Jewish community will remain vigorous in the midst of changing political circumstances. Judaism is in a period of reappropriation, reclaiming the classical Judaism of the "dual Torah" and its primary stress on sanctification rather than salvation. In this volume Neusner tries to show how the traditional rituals associated with meals, circumcision, bar and bat mitzvah, marriage, the Seder, the Sabbath, the high holy days, and death, work to "enchant," not merely convince. These rituals and customs transform ordinary experiences into something sacred. It is this sense of the sacred that keeps a measure of stability in Jewish identity as the world about changes. Neusner feels, however, that the rituals of the community—which have lost favor among contemporary Jews in comparison with individual and family rituals—need to be enhanced. The larger question, however, is whether this emphasis on ritual will be sufficient to maintain community identity. And do these communal experiences breed, however unwittingly, a willingness to go along with the political status quo?

These five interrelated volumes establish Jacob Neusner as a major figure in the rethinking not only of Judaism but of all religious traditions in our day. Whatever the limits of his provisional thesis, whatever the omissions, his thought bears consideration by anyone seriously concerned with the question of religious identity in the modern world. □

BOOKS

Women at war, women at peace

WOMEN AND WAR
Jean Bethke Elshtain
Basic Books, $19.95, 288 pp.

WHERE IS GOD NOW?
Nuclear Terror, Feminism, and the Search For God
Juliana M. Casey, I.H.M.
Sheed & Ward, $7.95, 160 pp.

Mary C. Segers

Reading these two stimulating books together provides a comprehensive and complementary introduction to contemporary debates about women, war, and peace. Juliana Casey, professor of religious studies at Mundelein College in Chicago, writes eloquently of the alternatives to warmaking and warthinking offered by feminist consciousness, feminine logic and language, and biblical norms. Jean Bethke Elshtain, a political scientist at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, balances Casey's woman-as-peacemaker view by reminding us that, historically, women have often served as warriors and enthusiastic cheerleaders of war.

The books appear in the context of two developments—women's involvement in the American and worldwide peace movement and the emergence of new scholarship in women's studies that have led to a renewed examination of women, politics, and war. Women's activism contributed to the 1963 Test Ban Treaty as well as to the 1982 Nuclear Freeze Campaign. In the 1980s, the active participation of women in both leadership and rank-and-file positions in the American and European peace movements has been noteworthy (recall Greenham Common, the Seneca Falls Peace Camp, Peacelinks, Women's Pentagon Action, the Peace Ribbon, Helen Caldicott, Frances Farley and the MX, Randall Forsberg and the Nuclear Freeze).

Women's studies specialists have also raised questions about the role of women and war. Since 1980, political scientists have identified a "gender gap" in voting behavior—a difference in the way male and female voters reacted to the candidacies of Reagan and Carter in the 1980 election. One of the more interesting explanations of this phenomenon was offered in 1982 by political scientist Kathleen Frankovic, who argued that the gender gap in the 1980 presidential election was explicable in terms of the candidates' positions on issues of war and peace; men tended to vote for the more bellicose Reagan, women for the more

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pacific Carter. The gender gap literature implies that as women's political participation increases, the content and style of military and foreign policy might change.

In examining the notion of citizenship in political thought, political scientists and feminist scholars have also noted that republican thinkers of the Western political tradition, who emphasized civic virtue, public spiritedness, and rational deliberation for the common good, tended to equate citizenship with the willingness and ability to defend one's country. This tradition of militarized citizenship (traceable to Cicero, the Roman Republic, Cincinnatus, Machiavelli, and James Harrington) was especially formative for the United States. Women's studies scholars now challenge the republican tradition, arguing that the problem with the tradition of civic virtue is that virtue is *armed*. Thus, this nexus between soldiering and citizenship has traditionally excluded half of humanity—women—from public life.

Elshtain shows how earlier American feminists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Jane Addams made assumptions about women's pacific nature in their arguments for women's suffrage. Juliana Casey's book, which makes a similar argument, is part of a long and venerable tradition.

In fact, Casey's book holds special interest because she was the only woman on the nine-member ad hoc committee that helped to draft the American bishops' pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*: "I sometimes felt very lonely; not because I was ignored or devalued, but because I knew my perspectives were different, my contexts other than those of everyone else. My own consciousness of this led me to realize the tragic absence of the feminine in the most vital of our country's and our church's spheres in new and intensified ways."

Casey's book is a useful primer on the growth and development of nuclear weapons as well as an analysis of the economic, social, and psychological costs of the arms race. For example, the abstract, technical jargon of nuclear discourse, and the use of euphemisms to conceal rather than reveal the truth (terms such as "serendipitous fallout," "anticipatory retaliation," or calling the MX missile "peacekeeper") are by-products of a masculine logic that prevails among defense intellectuals and the scientific elite at national laboratories and think tanks. Unlike feminine logic, it fails utterly to attend to the consequences for human beings of a nuclear exchange. Unlike men, Casey contends, women do not suppress their feelings in the face of nuclear catastrophe; they do not employ cold logic or clever, intellectual word-games to deny the terrifying realities of nuclear warfare.

Casey sees in this outlook a refusal to deny experience, a call to conversion, a movement to transform the culture away from attitudes and forms of behavior which are death-dealing. This call to conversion, to peacemaking on an individual and social level, is also God's call to renewed hope and faith in the face of the threat of nuclear annihilation and despair. In the last two chapters of her book, Casey explores the biblical concept of shalom and the Christian notion of God's redeeming presence as sources of hope in the struggle to fulfill the requirements of peacemaking. Hers is a book for weary peace activists who need encouragement as well as for jaded defense intellectuals who need a fresh perspective on the arms race.

In contrast, Elshtain is intent on conveying a sober, realistic assessment of gender-conditioned myths about war. In her view, war has perennially created history's greatest gender gap, casting men as "Just Warriors," the embodiment of armed civic virtue, and women as "Beautiful Souls," war's designated weepers and civic cheerleaders, who praise the heroes and condemn the cowardly. These narratives of war and politics are self-perpetuating, influencing the way real-life men and women act in times of war, shaping actual policy, and overshadowing alternatives.

For Elshtain, war is an object of discourse central to historic understandings of politics in the West ("In the beginning politics was war"). She traces the development of the tradition of armed civic virtue, then shows how Vietnam, nuclear war, and the entrance of women into the military have rendered it obsolete. War and politics are both changing. In nuclear

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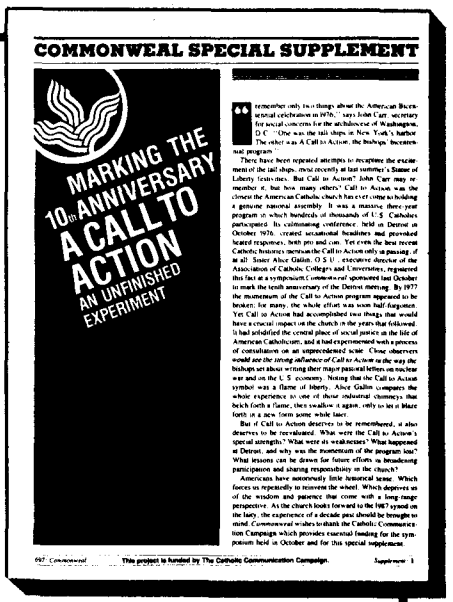

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warfare, there will probably be no winners. In Vietnam the United States did not win, men were not just warriors, and women were not good homekeepers, cheering their men or giving them a hero's welcome when they came home. The increasing presence of women in the military and in politics means that women have to begin to face the problem of "dirty hands" in politics, the difficult ethical dilemmas that routinely confront policymakers. Technological innovation in weaponry—even in conventional warfare—challenges our mythical understandings of the proper roles of men and women in war. Elshtain asks: "In a post-Holocaust, post-Hiroshima world, can Beautiful Souls and Just Warriors retain their luster?"

For Elshtain the anser is "no." Women are not simply peaceful, nurturant, life-giving—while men are warlike, aggressive, and mindlessly violent. Such stereotypical thinking, she argues, is uncritical and ahistorical, ignoring examples of female fighters, resisters, and combatants. Elshtain doubts whether the accession of more women to high public office will reform politics, and she takes exception to notions that women are intrinsically morally superior to men.

Women and War challenges us to move beyond rigid stereotypes of the male warrior and the female noncombatant to an imaginative reconstruction of our history and our politics. Only by drawing upon alternative images, she contends, can we begin to replace an aggressive, militaristic nationalism with a chastened, sober patriotism.

Can we reconcile Casey's and Elshtain's competing accounts of women and war? First, similarities exist between their methods. Good feminists both, each begins with her own experience. Casey's two-year stint on the bishops' committee shapes her account. Elshtain contrasts her training as a doctoral candidate studying international relations during the height of sixties' protest against the Vietnam War, with her experience as a young mother raising four children.

Second, each author gives special emphasis to history and literature of, by, and about women. Casey explores the work of the last twenty years on women's experience, moral development, psychology, spirituality, and literature—studies which uncover alternative worldviews. Elshtain gives deliberate attention to the history of women and war in American society, highlighting the efforts of Southern and Northern women during the Civil War as well as the work of Eleanor Roosevelt, Jane Addams, and others.

Finally, both books emphasize how war has changed and stress the importance of alternative ways of thinking about war and about enemies. Casey calls for an expansion of thinking, imagination, vision, and feeling, for new conceptions of language, logic, power, and relationship in order to cope with the terrifying realities of nuclear war. Elshtain's is also a book about thinking—about how we construe and conceptualize war and the roles of women and men in war. She thinks that traditional gender constructions of war and politics must be balanced by a realistic assessment of women's and men's abilities and by an examination of the historical record.

Still, there are important differences between these two accounts of women and war. Casey confines herself to nuclear war; Elshtain addresses war in history, conventional and nuclear. Casey seems to be ardently feminist whereas Elshtain has a more nuanced view, and is more skeptical about human potential—male or female. Both are right in their own way. Casey is correct to stress the need for women's imagination, sensitivity, perception, logic, vision, and alternative ways of conceiving power. Elshtain is right to emphasize that women are not the sole repositories of virtue nor men the sole source of vice in human history.

Will the increased political participation of women reform politics and eliminate war? The answers of these two books are not conclusive. The verdict, after all, is not yet in. We won't really know whether politics with female participants will be more sensible, compassionate, and less warlike until many more women occupy leadership positions. Until that day, both Juliana Casey's attractive arguments and Jean Elshtain's cautionary caveats can be entertained without contradiction. □

LED ON, PLANNED FOR, & PROTECTED

GOOD HEARTS
Reynolds Price
Atheneum, $18.95, 275 pp.

A COMMON ROOM
Reynolds Price
Atheneum, $23.95, 405 pp.

Dan Wakefield

When I started going back to church as a middle-aged writer who had shut off religious inquiry since college, I naturally had many questions for my minister. Fortunately, the Reverend Carl Scovel of Kings's Chapel, a Christian Unitarian church in Boston, is a literary as well as a literate clergyman, and he fed me just the right books at the right time to answer my particular craving and stimulate the desire for more. One of the most important volumes he handed me early on was *A Palpable God*, by Reynolds Price (Northpoint, 1985, $9.50), described in its subtitle as "Thirty Stories Translated from the Bible With an Essay on the Origins and Life of Narrative."

I was surprised as I was pleased and—as a writer newly returned to church, *affirmed*—to learn that Price, one of the widely admired novelists of my generation, was a Christian who not only professed his faith but saw it as central to his life and work. At a time of questioning his own beliefs (the Bible stories he cal-

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led "the bases of my life") and his work as a writer of fiction (at age thirty-five he asked "Could I go on for decades maybe, laboring to tell complex narratives to shrinking audiences?") he had turned to doing literal translations of "short, almost blindingly lucid Bible stories." He presented not only his English versions of those stories but also the thoughts and conclusions that writing them brought him. I was struck by his openness in speaking about matters that I was still tiptoeing around, and inspired by the audacity and clarity of his perceptions about narrative as well as faith:

> We crave nothing less than perfect story; and while we chatter or listen all our lives in a din of craving—jokes, anecdotes, novels, dreams, films, plays, songs, half the words of our days—we are satisfied only by the one short tale we feel to be true: *History is the will of a just God who knows us.*

He reported that after writing the translations:

> I, like millions, am convinced and have always been by the stories themselves—their narrative perfection, the speed and economy with which they offer all the heart's last craving in shapes as credible as any friend's tale of a morning walk. . . . They well understand that they give us one choice—if we call them untrue, we must call them insane. They are plainly not deceitful; and I plainly call them true, in some awareness of the range of objections.

I was grateful for this clear statement of what I felt myself but was too unsure and timid to articulate. Despite my appreciation of Price as a literary essayist illuminating the Christian message, I did not at once turn back to his fiction. I had read and appreciated his first novel, *A Long and Happy Life*, when it appeared in its entirety in *Harpers* in 1961. I remembered being caught at once by the headlong rush of a Faulkner-length opening sentence that also reminded me of the locomotive force that begins one of my all-time favorite novels, William Styron's *Lie Down in Darkness*. I was carried swiftly and surely through a lyrical story of suspenseful young love that at last (to the reader's relief, rooting them on) joins the lives of two contemporary smalltown Southerners, Rosacoke Mustian and Wesley Beavers.

Looking back, I did not remember any religious dimension to the story (I would hardly have been looking for one at that time) and when Price referred in *A Palpable God* to his "twenty-one years of work as a narrator of human encounters with the sacred," I took it as literary metaphor. Since my own return to faith, whenever I had heard mentions of religion as part of the concern of contemporary American literature, the writers usually cited were Flannery O'Connor and Walker Percy. While I admire the work of both, I found the theme of spirituality and Christianity in their fictions more allegorical than literal, a kind of theological puzzle to be solved through symbols and codes. The daily life representation of religion I was looking for—as a natural part of experience, of the order of things—I found more in the work of Jewish writers like Isaac Bashevis Singer and Chaim Potok. God was more real to me in Potok's *The Chosen* than in any other novel I knew of current American life.

The first time I felt that kind of "spiritual realism" in a contemporary American novel whose characters were Christian was a year or so ago when I picked up a paperback copy of Price's *Kate Vaiden* (Ballantine, $4.95, 376 pp), which had won The National Book Critics Circle Award in 1986. I was gripped at once by the narrative force of the story and pulled headlong into the life of "a real middle-sized white woman that has kept on going with strong eyes and teeth for fifty-seven years." It is a life in North Carolina begun in 1925 of an "ordinary" person's trials and tragedies and grace and brightness, the details and voices of that miracle of how a person can "last through time . . . all those separate days stacked before you, each one the same length and built from steel."

Kate is not a churchgoer or an overtly religious person, and yet she prays, and there are times that she feels "*led on*, planned for and protected." There are also other times when "hunting the cold

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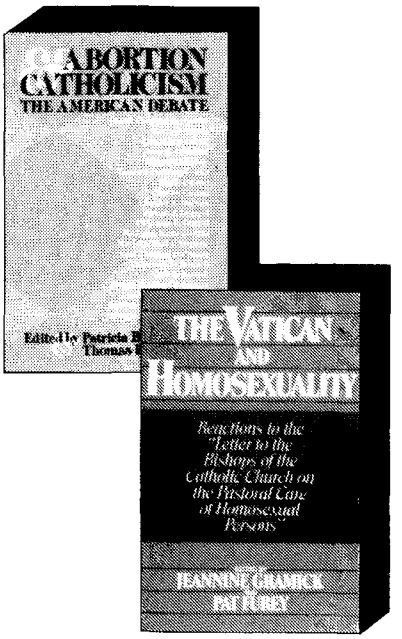
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black dark of my room for any new sign or sight of guidance" she knows that awful frustration that is surely experienced at some time by all believers, the feeling that "I might as well have been Helen Keller in a barrel." What I most appreciated in the novel was this sense of a person for whom God and prayer and guidance or sometimes the lack of it is a natural part of life, not stuck in, not used as symbol, but simply *there*, as common as air and water, the relation of a human being to "a palpable God."

This everyday sense of the sacred, of religion as a natural element of life, is present in all of Price's work, and gives it a dimension that is lacking in the cramped landscape of most contemporary fiction. Most of his characters are—as he wrote of his own parents—"religious but not churchly"—and God is sometimes absent to them but never dead. They make just as many mistakes and no doubt commit as many sins and suffer as much as their atheistic fictional counterparts, but there is a dignity to them that is bestowed by the author and derives I think in some basic way from their natural faith in something beyond and outside of their own skins.

The Surface of the Earth (Atheneum, 1975, $9.95) is a family saga traced through fathers and sons and the women they love through the first half of this century, full of waste and tragic failures of communication and yet undergirded, like the earth itself, by a firm depth and mysterious order. The players in the drama seem to know or sense instinctively they are part of a scheme of things grander than they can fathom, and though the acuteness of their real pain is not softened by such knowledge it is somehow made honorable by it, or seems to be so in the reader's perception of their rendered lives.

The Mustian family—mainly Rosacoke and her brothers Milo and Rato—were the source of Price's stunning first published story ("A Chain of Love") and first two novels. They are now gathered in a single paperback volume called *Mustian* (Ballantine, $4.95, 361 pp.) and in it I read *A Generous Man*, that comic real-life fable the author had begun with the working title that describes the combatants that stir the story to action: "A Mad Dog and a Boa Constrictor." I read again *A Long and Happy Life*, enjoying especially this time around the natural interplay of sacred and human (as in life, woven together so artfully we don't always notice) in the glorious finale of a Christmas pageant in which the still unmarried Rosacoke, playing The Virgin, is pregnant with Wesley's child.

I was delighted to learn that Price was bringing back Wesley and Rosa (she dropped the last syllable from her name) to tell the story of their lives after twenty-eight years of marriage in his new novel, *Good Hearts*. They have moved from the small town of Afton, North Carolina, to Raleigh where he works as a mechanic and she is a secretary in a college English Department. Rosa at forty-eight is reasonably happy with her life and does not know that Wesley at fifty is critically discontent with his until one day shortly before Christmas he simply disappears, not even leaving a note. She writes in the journal that tells us part of the story: "I tried to pray and discovered God was nowhere to be found, not by me. By then it was more than two a.m. No hope of daylight before nearly seven. So I clamped my teeth, pulled up the afghan that Mama made Horace, and composed my hands to wait out the time."

It will be a long and harshly trying time for Rosa, not only because of her husband's absence but because it is followed almost at once by the entry into their bedroom of a rapist. Knowing nothing of this, Wesley has gone in search of relief from his own mid-life malaise to Nashville, and moved in with a twenty-six-year-old radiology technician he met in a bar on New Year's Eve.

The older man having an affair with a pretty young blonde who works at a local hospital and lives in a trailer, while the wife he left behind is raped, sounds like the stuff of soapy melodrama. Price, however, presents his characters with a wholeness of vision that includes their brokenness as part of their humanity, so people who are usually seen as types or clichés to be scorned become particular individuals. Even the rapist, in his twisted behavior, is rendered from *his* point of view as well as his victim's; it is in fact when he hears and registers *her* experience that his own distorted vision is altered.

Wesley returns from his wandering search and his life is re-joined with Rosa, not in a blazing romantic renewal but an act that is far more stirring than any emotional or sexual fireworks: "the unlikely choice of two normal creatures to work again at a careful life." It seems a deep and quiet triumph, as does their future: "They could not know they were safe till their endings, which would be hard and slow a long way off. This modest house would be home till then. It had room enough for the small calm pleasures that would not be rare."

Good Hearts, like all of Price's work, is a powerful testimony of faith in the goodness at the core of human experience, in full acknowledgment of the suffering as well as joy that compose it. This faith is stated most plainly and eloquently in his essay "At the Heart" that concludes the brilliant new collection *Common Room*: "We steadily flee a creator who can tend both the slow wheel of the galaxies and our own feverish escape while he awaits our return. For his own purposes as he waits, he may hide behind all but impenetrable screens—holocausts, individual agonized lifetimes—but the merciful intent of his hand is eventually discernible by an attentive patient witness."

We have no better witness than Reynolds Price. □

REVIEWERS

MARY C. SEGERS *is associate professor of political science at Rutgers University and Henry Luce Fellow in theology at Harvard Divinity School. She is co-author of* Elusive Equality: Liberalism, Affirmative Action, and Social Change in America *(Associated Faculty Press).*

DAN WAKEFIELD *is a novelist and journalist whose books include* Island in the City, Selling Out, Under the Apple Tree, *and, most recently,* Returning: A Spiritual Journey *(Doubleday).*

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RELIGIOUS BOOKNOTES

Ecclesiologies in conflict

Lawrence S. Cunningham

We are now a generation away from the Second Vatican Council and my suspicion is that many eyes glaze over at the thought of rehearsing the events of that watershed convocation. The heady enthusiasm of the conciliar period gave way, in time, to second thoughts about its usefulness or the simple acceptance of its reality. After all, most young people have no memory of any other kind of church. Nonetheless, as scholars endlessly note, the council represented a sea change in the history of Catholicism.

The Reception of Vatican II, *edited by Giuseppe Alberigo, et al, Catholic University, $39.95, $19.95 paper, 363 pages.*

Precisely because we are at some distance from the council, the time has come to look back to fill out a scorecard on its achievements and failures. Such a tally in theological jargon goes under the name of *reception:* how did the Catholic world "receive" the teaching(s) of the council? To that question Alberigo's volume attempts an answer. His own opening essay is worth the price of the book. He notes that some past councils were never "received" by the church (e.g., the Council of Florence; the Fifth Lateran Council); they were dead letters soon after their close. Others—most notably Chalcedon and Trent—entered into the life of the church in such a way that their influence must be reckoned with down to this day. Vatican II obviously belongs to that latter category.

What Alberigo and his fellow contributors (mainly European, North American, and Latin American professional theologians) make abundantly clear is that Vatican II was very much a transitional council whose deliberations, for good historical reasons, cobbled together documents which strained to contain competing theologies that are not always reconcilable. Likewise, a number of the essayists in Alberigo's volume note the somewhat upbeat and optimistic character of the conciliar texts; an optimism that has drawn criticism from both the right and the left today.

Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda, *edited by Lucien Richard, et al, Paulist, $12.95, 223 pages.*

In some not insignificant sense, Vatican II was very much a sixties event.

Alberigo's volume looks back to the council and forward to the present day in order to assess the reception of the conciliar spirit. The one conclusion that all his contributors share is a conviction that a new generation of commentaries on the council is badly needed to explicate more clearly the tensions in the council; tensions which, as Eugenio Corecco points out in a long-detailed essay, spilled over into the new *Code of Canon Law*, a code which, by turns, legislates for a hierarchically organized church and exhorts a pastoral assembly of believers in Jesus Christ.

Lucien Richard's volume of essays, by contrast, wishes to think beyond the Second Vatican Council. Occasioned by a famous essay of Karl Rahner (a version of which is in this volume) arguing that Vatican II marked the beginning of a world church and the end of a Eurocentric church, the contributors, all connected to the Weston School of Theology, try to think about the shape of this church of the future. Such an enterprise, of course, does not preclude a look back. John O'Malley, who has written some seminal essays on the historical significance of the council, notes the singularity of Vatican II: the role of the media; the participation of non-Roman Catholics; the lack of canons; the verbosity and lack of technical character in the documents; the near immediate impact of the decrees (e.g., for a vernacular liturgy) on the life of ordinary believers, etc. This essay provides a nice complement to the work of Alberigo's volume.

While Richard's volume promises a look to the future, the essays, in fact, concern themselves with a balanced look at the state of certain theological issues today. Richard's two essays point out the issues inherent in the shift from a preoccupation with missions (as in: foreign missions) to the more fundamental notion of the church in mission. Similarly, the essays on ecclesiology, the centrality of preaching, and the shifting notions of sacramentality point to the future only in the sense that they set out the problems with which the church will have to deal in the future.

These two volumes, taken together, offer abundant proof that we are indeed between two theological worlds and the lineaments of what our future theology will look like are still not clear. The Alberigo volume is the fuller and more technical of the two but when both are read in tandem one can only conclude that the theological task is enormous, both in the need to understand what has happened to us in

The Church: Learning and Dissent, *Ladislas Orsy, Michael Glazier, $14.95, 172 pages.*

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *will be teaching theology at the University of Notre Dame next fall. His books include* The Catholic Experience *and* The Catholic Faith: An Introduction.

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the last generation (the task of retrieval) and how one goes about constructing a theology (theologies?) that takes into account the new Catholicism which Karl Rahner saw as coming after Vatican II.

The other books in this survey deal with specific issues that illustrate the basic theses of the Alberigo and Richard volumes. Father Orsy, for instance, argues that the style of the documents of Vatican II makes them hard to interpret with exactitude. He proposes a new genre which he calls *seminal locutions* to describe those insights of the council that point to religious mysteries which are not fully developed in the documents themselves. This idea has some family resemblance to Newman's theory of doctrinal development. Like Alberigo and Richard, Orsy thinks we are far from having a full hermeneutical analysis of what the council did and "meant." That analysis is most needed precisely because a goodly number of the conciliar pronouncements were not written in a technical style and did not, as earlier councils were wont to do, provide succinct canons summing up their authoritative teaching.

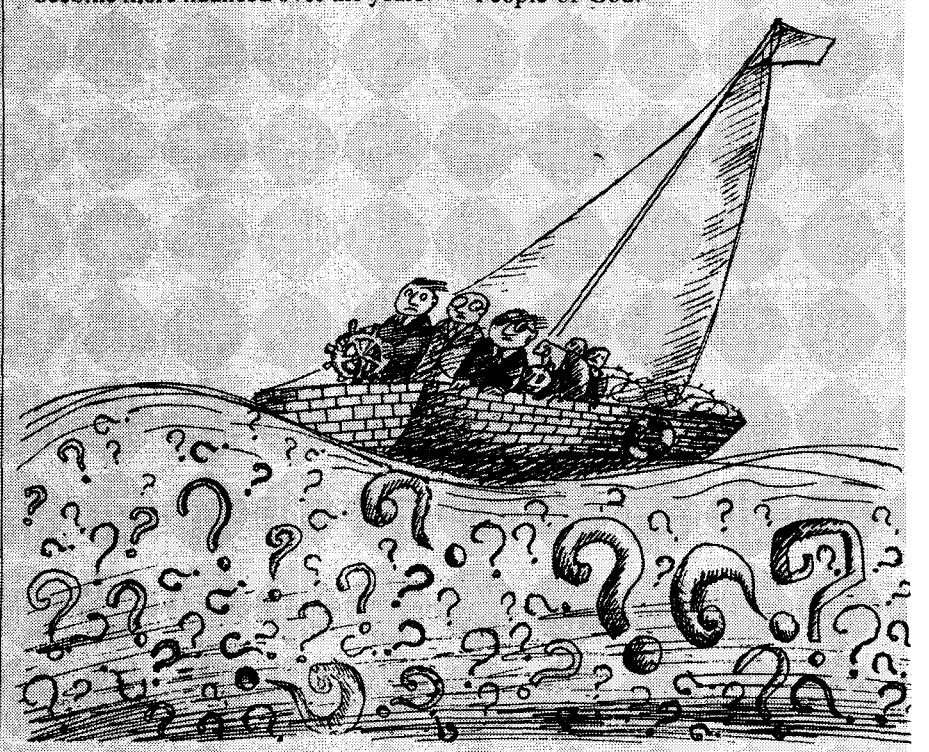
The subtitle of Father Orsy's book indicates the topics he takes up: *Magisterium-Assent-Dissent-Academic Freedom*. Orsy is a world class canonist and his legal training gives to this volume a crispness and clarity that one finds in the best of legal writing. He takes the vexatious issues that often trigger headlines and admirably clarifies what is involved. In essence, Orsy attempts to answer these linked questions: what is the magisterium of the church? What assent can it expect? What are the limits of the assent? How does dissent relate to the magisterium? What is the relationship between magisterium and the university? These questions are very much in the air these days but Father Orsy brings to them a cool eye of analysis and clarification set in the context of a church which both teaches and learns: *ecclesia docens et discens*. This slim volume, a model of good sense and deep learning, brings much light to an area where, alas, we often have a surfeit of heat. It should be required reading for anyone who wishes to enter the ongoing debates about the role of dissent in contemporary Catholicism.

Father Charles Curran has been at the center of a struggle with the Roman authorities over the precise issues discussed by Father Orsy in his book. His latest volume collects essays (Father Curran is primarily an essayist) written over the past two years. The first three deal with his travails with Rome and thus provide an addendum to his published dossier on that unhappy experience: *Faithful Dissent* (Sheed & Ward, 1986). The other essays deal with questions of sexual and social ethics. One of his primary themes in these essays is to chronicle, by careful reading, how ethical positions have changed and become more nuanced over the years.

Tensions in Moral Theology, *Charles Curran, University of Notre Dame, $19.95, 202 pages.*

The social teachings from Leo XIII down to the present pontiff do not form a seamless whole but a process of refinement and evolution as the Thomistic basis for social teaching(s) gave way to other insights from other sources. This evolution provides justification for the word "tension" in the title: the tension between past and present. Another kind of tension is less healthy. Curran argues strenuously that Roman interventions in the area of sexual ethics have had the parlous effect of retarding the development of a mature theology of sexuality in contemporary Catholicism.

It would be facile to think of the differences between Father Curran and the Vatican as merely an argument over the issue of sexual ethics. Although that is the neurologic point of their disagreement, it is also clear, as Father Curran notes, that the primary issue is the competition between two quite different ecclesiologies; a competition made all the more difficult because Vatican II did not completely solve the tensions between the notion of the church as a *societas perfecta* and the church as the Pilgrim People of God.



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That competition is perfectly illustrated by Madonna Kolbenschlag's anthology which centers on Rome's insistence that some Sisters of Mercy resign from the public offices they held. Such offices (both elected and appointed) were seen as incompatible with their status as vowed religious. Kolbenschlag's anthology chronicles the cases of Agnes Mary Mansour (head of Michigan's Department of Social Services), Elizabeth Morancy (state legislator in Rhode Island), and Arlene Violet (the same state's attorney general) who all, in the end, lost their appeals to Rome. The middle section of the book offers some theological essays on the situation but the most valuable part of the book is the last section which reprints the entire correspondence between the Sisters of Mercy and the Roman authorities. Awash in the dead sludge of post-conciliar language (the sisters are forever consulting and praying; the Vatican is forever requesting clarifications and citing canon law), these letters almost manage to hide the fundamental character of the issues at stake: the nature of the church; the fundamental mission of the church; the notion of the vowed religious life.

Authority, Community, and Conflict, *edited by Madonna Kolbenschlag, Sheed & Ward, $17.95, 225 pages.*

I say "almost" because a volume like this (and Curran's *Faithful Dissent*) is a case study of the problems raised, at a more theoretical level, by the earlier volumes noted in this review.

John Cardinal O'Connor, archbishop of New York, is not torn by competing ecclesiologies. He incarnates the old dictum *Roma locuta, causa finita*. So what is Nat Hentoff, a wonderful liberal journalist and self-described member of the Proud and Ancient Order of Stiff-Necked Jewish Atheists, up to in writing a *New Yorker* profile of the cardinal which is the basis of this book? Hentoff, basically, is intrigued by this rigidly orthodox Catholic hierarch who also is passionately pro-labor, against *contra* funding in Central America, committed to the needs of the poor, and a lifelong servant of the needs of mentally retarded children. Good journalist that he is, Hentoff provides us with a well written chronicle of O'Connor's rise from the military chaplaincy to the most visible see in the American church.

John Cardinal O'Connor, *Nat Hentoff, Scribner's, $19.95, 276 pages.*

What Hentoff also makes clear is that O'Connor never second guesses a decision or action of the Vatican and, if he ever has doubts about the rightness of his theological views, he never articulates them out loud. If one reads Vatican II in a certain fashion, that is a great consolation; if one reads it in a different manner, however, it is reason to be suspicious of a man who, if Hentoff is to be believed, does not find it unimaginable that a supremely orthodox, socially liberal, and vigorously mature American could aspire to the chair of Peter.

If one were to single out a leitmotif that runs through all of these quite disparate volumes it would be the problem of the relationship of the local church to the Great Church. As Joseph Komonchak points out in an essay in Alberigo's volume, the local church is *the* church writ small but it is part of the larger community which makes up the church catholic. How the local churches, in their bewildering cultural diversity and in their particular needs, simultaneously maintain their sense of self and their sense of being part of the universal church, is a problem, not only of discipline and jurisprudence, but of culture, language, and understanding. It is only recently that we have paid a goodly amount of attention to the local church and, with that attention, problems inevitably arose which, as of this date, have not found fully satisfactory solutions. To strike a healthy balance may be one of the premier tasks of the church as it moves towards the new millennium. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 418)

cial feeding or hydration they have an obligation to receive it, even if it must be forced upon them. This implies that a patient not only has a "right to life" but a "duty to live."

"Knowing When to Stop" has placed this issue in perspective for me and given me a sense of peace that my beliefs are founded in my church's moral tradition. A sincere thank you to *Commonweal* and John Mitchell.

MELANIE MATHEWS

Excessive treatment?

Pittsburgh, Pa.

To the Editors: John Mitchell, Jr., is quite correct in his interpretation of the Catholic tradition ["Knowing When to Stop," May 6]. In this area, Roman Catholic health-care ethics has shown a sensitivity to people which has been in keeping with the best of Catholic theology. There is no need to impose useless or excessively burdensome "treatments" on people; indeed, proper understanding of theology and of the basic message of Jesus forbids it. It is true that this issue raises some questions which are not easily resolved. For example, some philosophers and some theologians argue against the Catholic tradition by insisting that the withholding of medical (artificial) hydration and nutrition is a direct killing, that it is the act of omitting nourishment which kills the patient. But the Catholic moral tradition, correctly in my judgment, has argued that it is the disease which kills the patient, and that excessively burdensome or humanly useless treatments need not be imposed. I think those who require such treatment in all cases are untrue to the tradition that some of them claim to uphold.

While it is understandable that some

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might interpret the withholding or withdrawal of medical hydration and nutrition as a step toward actions which are indeed immoral, this fear ought not allow us the luxury of mistreatment to the dying and their families. Though I agree that there is an ever-present and very real danger that our society might move toward a disregard of the value of human life (indeed, we have done so in many areas already), I am puzzled about the argument that cessation of useless or burdensome treatment will hasten that process. I would suggest that the existence of these useless and burdensome treatments makes it easier, not harder, for those who support active euthanasia to bring about legislative changes in our society. One of the major reasons why people want such legislative changes is that they fear a long illness where healthcare professionals treat uselessly. They do not want this for themselves or for their families. If we want to resist the "euthanasia movement," we will do it better by supporting humane and morally correct treatment policies than by imposing burdensome measures on the sick.

DAVID F. KELLY
Duquesne University

Any reasonable hope?

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: John J. Mitchell's use of the Vatican and the Chicago Archdiocese to criticize the New Jersey bishops on the subject of tube feeding ["Knowing When to Stop," May 6] rests on misrepresentations of all three sources.

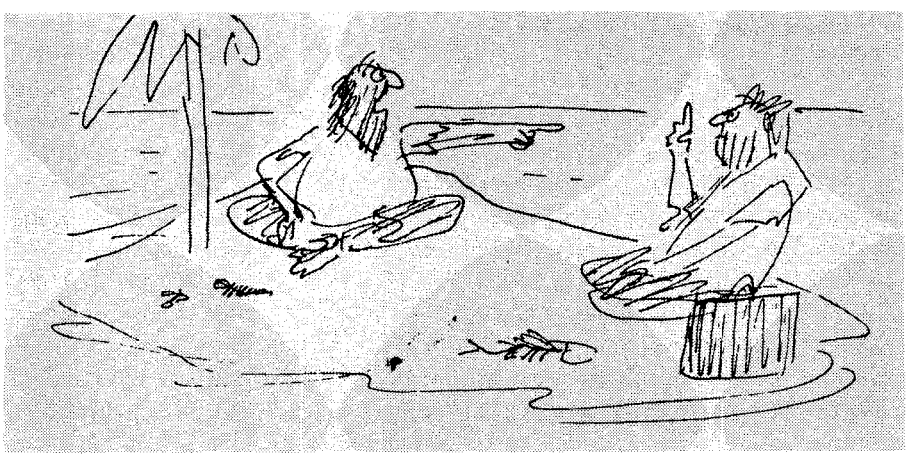
Mitchell begins by misquoting the Vatican's *Declaration on Euthanasia* as saying "withdrawing treatment is not equivalent to suicide." In fact the Declaration says this *only* of a treatment "which carries a risk or is burdensome." In other words, this applies only to extraordinary or "disproportionate" means. The same paragraph of the Declaration notes that in such cases one may "make do with the normal means that medicine can offer." As the United States bishops; *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Facilities* points out, the denial of these normal or "ordinary" means *is* "equivalent to euthanasia.

Thus a great deal turns on whether artificial feeding is generally to be considered extraordinary or disproportionate means. Mitchell claims without evidence that it falls into this category whenever a patient is "in a persistent vegetative state with no hope of recovery." But the Vatican Declaration nowhere says this, and documents such as the Vatican *Statement for the International Year of Disabled Persons* declare that the right to have one's life preserved and protected exists regardless of the extent to which a person has lost his or her mental faculties.

Nor does the Chicago Archdiocesan Medical-Moral Commission endorse such a broadly permissive position. For while Mitchell implies that life-sustaining means are devoid of benefit whenever they cannot restore the patient to cognitive functioning, the Chicago commission classifies such means as beneficial so long as they offer "any reasonable hope of success of prolonging life." This commission recommended to hospital personnel a statement by the NCCB Committee for Pro-Life Activities to the effect that "since food and water are necessities of life for all human beings, and can generally be provided without the risks and burdens of more aggressive means for sustaining life, there should be a strong presumption in favor of their use." The commission also opposed omitting such means "with the intention of shortening the life of the patient or bringing on death," and urged particular care in protecting "those who are seriously ill or permanently impaired in one way or another" because of society's "profound disregard" for the dignity of their lives.

The New Jersey bishops' brief in the *Jobes* case cited the identical passage from the NCCB Pro-Life Committee statement about maintaining a "strong presumption in favor" of food and fluids. That brief also went further, seeming to imply in a few passages that such means may *never* be withdrawn. Archbishop McCarrick of Newark corrected this impression on June 11, 1987, when he publicly explained that the brief was primarily directed against a "quality of life" rationale for removing easily provided food and fluids from unconscious but nondying patients in nursing homes. The brief, said Archbishop McCarrick, "did not address the issue of withdrawing food and water from a terminally ill, dying patient, or an unconscious or dying patient, when the means of providing food and water are dangerous or burdensome to the patient, when continuation is clearly useless in preserving life, or when the actual nutrition and hydration creates new suffering for a dying patient." This statement of almost a year ago resolved the apparent conflict between Newark and Chicago.

Mitchell's further claim that the New Jersey bishops failed to seek input from those who directly care for patients is puzzling. The Jobes family filed suit only because the owners and staff of the nursing home were adamantly opposed in conscience to removing Nancy Jobes's nourishment. Obviously these medical and nursing personnel were the people



"Objection overruled!"

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most directly involved in this patient's care.

RICHARD DOERFLINGER
Assistant Director NCCB Committee
for Pro-Life Activities

Like a lethal injection

Los Angeles, Calif.

To the Editors: An appalling number of misperceptions color the debate among Catholics (including theologians and some bishops) about the ethical validity of withholding or withdrawing artificially administered nutrition or hydration from a patient who is terminally ill or comatose. Some of these misperceptions were assembled and approved by John G. Mitchell, Jr., in his *Commonweal* article. . . . The biggest trap for the unwary is the familiar distinction between "ordinary" and "extraordinary" means of preserving life (or as some prefer "heroic" versus "non-heroic" or "proportionate" versus "non-proportionate"). As I see it, this distinction is irrelevant to the present controversy.

Many of those who believe that the non-use of nutrition and hydration is morally wrong argue that the procedures are not excessively intrusive nor particularly burdensome to the patient, and therefore constitute ordinary means.

This overlooks the fact, as pointed out in Professor Mitchell's article, that in determining what is ordinary or extraordinary, we are not confined to considering the burden of the treatment itself, but might consider also whether the medical procedure is disproportionate to the result. It is obvious that a ninety-year-old terminal cancer patient need not undergo surgery for a heart condition, which would be ordinary care in most situations, because when we are finished we still have a ninety-year-old terminal cancer patient.

On the other hand, those, like Professor Mitchell, who advocate withholding/removal of nutrition/hydration under the ordinary/extraordinary dichotomy, run into another problem, and one that I think is insurmountable.

All Catholics agree (and if you don't agree, forget it) that we should not deliberately kill a dying or comatose patient, whatever the burden. We abhor suicide and active euthanasia, for reasons that are not the subject of this letter. We also agree that some procedures, such as a ventilator (respirator), can be removed if the treatment is extraordinary under the traditional distinction.

That leads to the ultimate question: Is removal of nutrition or hydration the equivalent, for example, of removal of a respirator? If it is, the debate is over. I suggest, however, that it is actually the equivalent of administering a lethal injection.

If a respirator is removed, the patient will probably die from lack of oxygen brought on by the underlying injury or disease. However, the patient might live. Death is not inevitable, as Karen Quinlan dramatically demonstrated. The procedure is terminated, and the result is in the hands of God.

If nutrition or hydration is discontinued, the patient will die from starvation or dehydration very shortly. Death is as inevitable and as certain as though a lethal injection were given.

Moreover, if the removal of nutrition or hydration is to be permitted with death the inevitable result, the proponents of euthanasia will argue that it is foolish and inhumane to use this method of causing death, when a lethal injection would be quicker and easier on the patient.

I have heard the argument that the distinction between nutrition/hydration and a respirator is that food and water are basic. This is not a valid distinction. Food and water are no more basic than oxygen.

I became interested in the subject when I helped draft legislative bills in California last year and this year. The gist of the bills is that nutrition or hydration cannot be withheld or withdrawn if the result will be death from malnutrition or dehydration. In the last stages, when death is imminent, nutrition and hydration can be withdrawn because death will not result from malnutrition or dehydration.

So far, no one has even addressed the basic distinction. One State Senator on the Judiciary Committee tried to brush it aside as being simply a matter of "statistics." If anyone has a more substantial response to my argument, I would like to hear it. If not, I must assume that the denial of nutrition or hydration is euthanasia or suicide.

WALTER R. TRINKHAUS
Professor Emeritus
Loyola Law School

The author replies:

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to Mr. Richard Doerflinger and Professor Trinkaus. Unfortunately, Mr. Doerflinger failed to indicate whether he was speaking "officially" for the Bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities or simply expressing his own opinions on the views I expressed. From the content of his letter I presume the latter.

I made no attempt in my article to break new ground in Catholic medical ethics with regard to the morality of withholding, limiting, or discontinuing the use of artificial hydration and/or nutrition for the terminally ill or irreversible comatose patient. On the contrary, I articulated a moderate-centrist position on this issue. It is consistent with traditional Catholic thinking about the moral obligation to prolong human life. I am confident that my thinking is in accord not only with the thought of some of the most respected Catholic medical ethicists in the United States including Richard McCormick, S.J., John Paris, S.J., and Kevin O'Rourke, O.P., but also with the Advisory Opinion of the Medical Ethics Commission of the Archdiocese of Chicago and the moral stance adopted by Bishop Lewis Gelineau (Providence, R.I.) in the Marsha Gray case.

Mr. Doerflinger's assertion that I have misrepresented the Vatican's *Declaration on Euthanasia*, the Advisory Opinion of the Archdiocese of Chicago, and the position of the Catholic bishops of New Jersey in the Nancy Ellen Jobes case is both self-serving and inaccurate. He accuses me of misrepresentation because my interpretation is at variance with his own. I will confidently leave to your readers the judgment whether my interpretation misrepresents the substance of these documents.

I am puzzled by Mr. Doerflinger's assertion that Archbishop McCarrick's statement of June 24, 1987 "resolved the

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apparent conflict between Chicago and Newark." If this were true, a task force of the New Jersey Catholic Conference, chaired by Bishop James McHugh of Newark, would not still be promoting a draft policy on artificial hydration and nutrition which lacks the moderate reasoning and nonpolemical tone which characterizes the Advisory Opinion of the Archdiocese of Chicago. As to the consultative style of the New Jersey bishops in this matter, I'd be grateful if Mr. Doerflinger would forward to me a list of the Catholic health-care professionals in New Jersey who were consulted by the bishops prior to the filing of the brief with the New Jersey Supreme Court in the Nancy Ellen Jobes case.

My position on the ethics of withholding, limiting, or discontinuing artificial hydration and nutrition is simple, straightforward, and, I believe, consistent with the Catholic medical-moral tradition. In summary:

a. providing a patient with artificial hydration and nutrition represents an invasive medical procedure;

b. the moral obligation to initiate or continue an invasive medical procedure rests upon a judgment which involves weighing the benefits and the burdens;

c. invasive medical procedures, including artificial hydration and nutrition, are not morally obliged if they are unduly burdensome or if they are useless;

d. patients and/or their families are commissioned with the moral responsibility of deciding whether or not invasive medical procedures are obligatory. These decisions should not rest in distant hands whether civil or ecclesiastical.

There are three basic issues which focus my differences with the Catholic bishops of New Jersey on this matter. First, I differ with their contention that providing a patient with artificial hydration and nutrition *does not* represent an invasive medical treatment, but simply an "ordinary means" of care. Secondly, I differ with their contention that withholding or withdrawing artificial hydration and nutrition from a terminally ill or permanently unconscious patient "constitutes a new cause of death— starvation and dehydration." Finally, I am deeply troubled by the authoritarian style and polemical tone which has characterized their approach to this terribly sensitive issue, an approach unlikely to nurture support among a majority of Catholics or the public.

In my article I indicated my appreciation for Archbishop McCarrick's concern about the "slippery slope" in matters pertaining to the withholding or terminating of life-prolonging medical treatments. I share the archbishop's concern in this regard. However, a legitimate concern about the "slippery slope" should not push the church wittingly or unwittingly into advocating a position which appears to deny patients or their families the right to do "what is morally permissible."

Professor Trinkaus correctly points out that the opponents to withholding or discontinuing artificial hydration and nutrition are ill-advised when they claim that artificial hydration and nutrition represent an "ordinary" means of treatment which is normally morally obliged of patients.

What is confusing about Professor Trinkaus's letter is that he appears to advocate a position regarding the withholding or discontinuing of artificial hydration and nutrition which is even *more extreme* than those who see it as simply an "ordinary" means of care, suggesting that there is an almost *absolute* obligation to endure artificial hydration and nutrition except in those cases when death from a terminal illness will occur prior to "starvation." According to Professor Trinkaus's reasoning, artificial hydration and nutrition may never be withdrawn from a patient in a persistent vegetative state. His logic obliges a form of medical vitalism which has no defense within the Catholic tradition.

On May 26 Joseph Cardinal Bernadin of Chicago in an address before the University of Chicago Hospital's Center for Clinical Ethics called for a national consensus which would prohibit active euthanasia, but which would allow for withholding or discontinuing artificial hydration and nutrition when these measures are useless or excessively costly or painful. In my article I attempted to express these same sentiments.

JOHN J. MITCHELL, JR.

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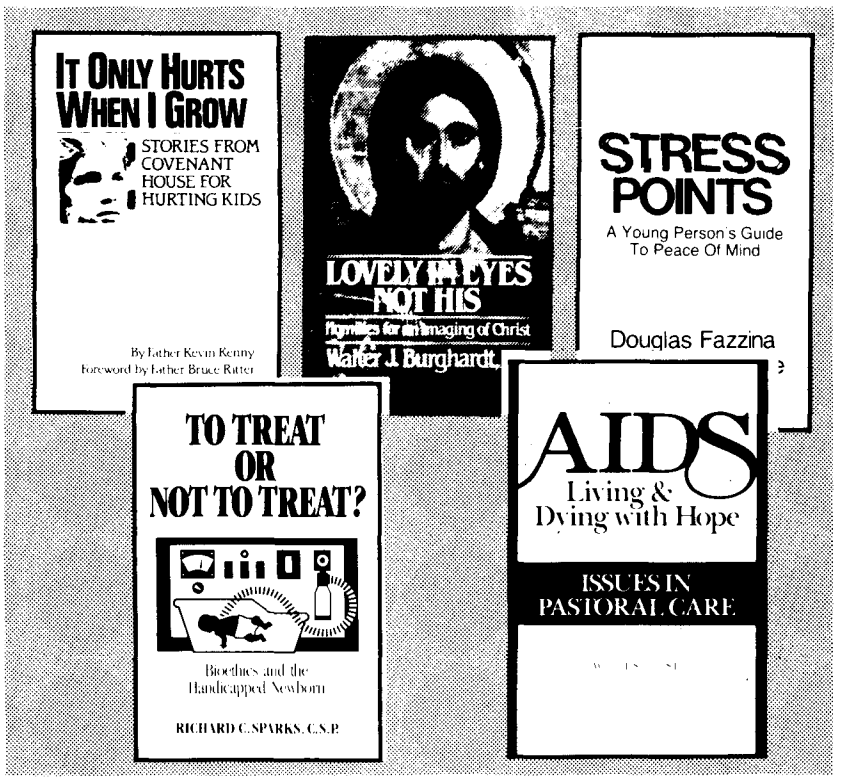
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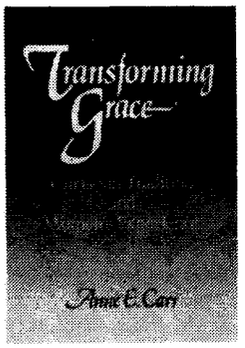

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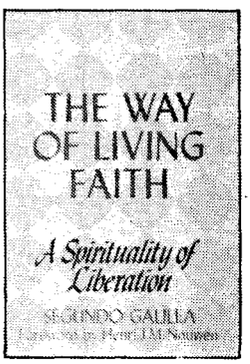

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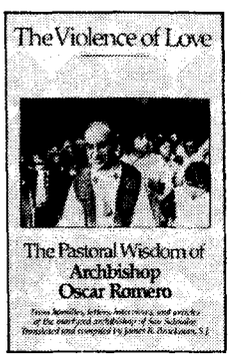

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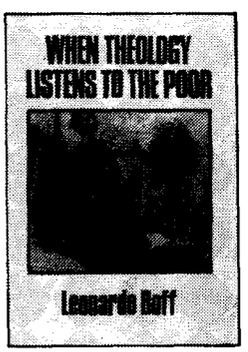

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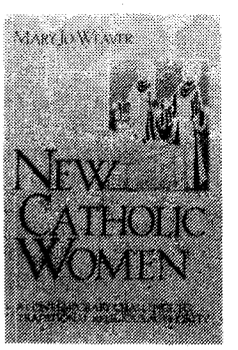

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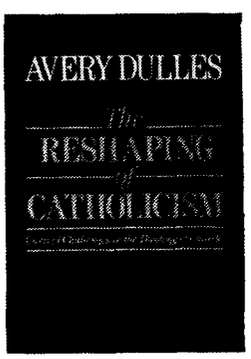

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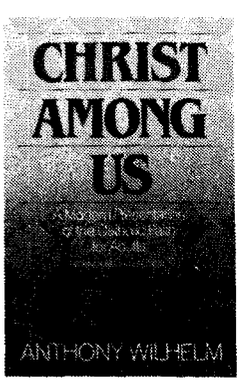

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